A WOMAN OF TO-DAY

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BY

MARGARET CRAWFORD JACKSON.

EDITED BY

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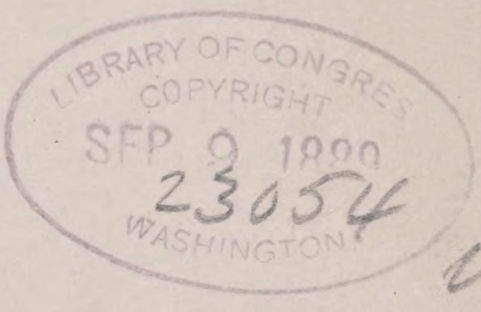

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MARGARET CRAWFORD JACKSON
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DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY

OF

ANDREW WILSON

BY

HIS DAUGHTER,

M. C. J.

INTRODUCTION.

In the fiction of to-day, where authors seem to think the heroine must needs pass through countless dangers, both moral and physical, before becoming a subject of interest to the public, it has occurred to me that there may be some who would find a pleasant relief in the simple story of an every-day woman, in rural surroundings, among well-known friends.

With this idea in mind, there has been no attempt to introduce startling situations.

The high lights and deep shadows of life have simply been suggested.

It is the sketch, not the finished picture, and if eyes, that have grown weary over sensational vermilions and literary blues, shall find here an hour of rest, I am content.

M. C. J.

PART FIRST.

A WOMAN OF TO-DAY.

"Oh, that a song would sing itself to me,
Out of the heart of nature, or the heart
Of man; the child of nature, not of art,
Fresh as the morning, salt as the salt sea,
With just enough of bitterness to be
A medicine to this sluggish mood and start
The life-blood in my veins and so impart
Healing and help in this dull lethargy."

LONGFELLOW.

IT was on the second day of May, 188–; the Victoria was steaming rapidly into port. New York was already dimly outlined ahead, and it was evident to the two men, who were silently smoking at the rail and watching the outlines, as they grew clearer, that they would lie at the dock some hours before they were due.

Finally the younger one of the two inter-

rogated: "You'll have no objection to going up to-night, will you, Erle?"

"No, Paul, there is nothing to keep me here, you know."

There was something suspiciously like a sigh, following the reply, but Paul Bronson was intent on his thoughts again and Erle, otherwise known as John Erle, M.D., turned back to his study of the sea.

"I haven't said much about my cousin Marcia, Erle, because I don't know whether you'll like her," said Paul after a pause.

"I don't know what you call 'much,' Paul, but if ever a woman's praises were well sung, Miss Hunt is that woman, and a better singer than Paul Bronson does not exist."

"Now, Erle, don't chaff; of course I like Marcia; we grew up together. Hard pull it was too, this time, going off without her, but you see, she does not strike all people the same way, and I didn't want to disappoint you."

"Hear him," said Erle, apostrophizing the sea, then he continued, "I am not a lady's man, Paul, perhaps I don't want what other people do."

Paul looked up at the handsome man beside him. A tall, strong, well-moulded figure, crowned with a perfect head, hair dark and close cut, honest eyes of dark blue, under a magnificent brow, and a good straight nose. His soft moustache curled slightly, and his chin was so delicately rounded, yet so firm, that many a woman had at one time or another fallen in love with this feature of his face alone.

Quiet, reserved man as he was, he never seemed aware of any interest he might have created in the opposite sex. Altogether he was a man to whom his superiors in office naturally turned with a loving dependence, sure that his clear head, keen intellectual perceptions and executive ability were always ready to lighten their heavy load of hard

work and responsibility. While the younger men always respected him, a few, like Paul, loved him with a love so tender and unselfish that it was like that of a woman. He had been two years in the Vienna hospitals and absorbed in hard work. He had sought to find, in the love for his profession, a certain compensation for the absence of all home ties in his life.

His father was dead and his step-mother and two half-sisters were uncongenial. He was virtually homeless, save for a faculty he had of investing his quarters, wherever they might be, with an atmosphere peculiarly his own.

When Paul had sought him out, three months before, Erle had not allowed himself to think much of what his life might be, after his return to New York. There was no definite prospect ahead and he did not wish to think of the inevitable loneliness, which would, most likely, fill in the break between

this old-world life and any settled living in the new. Of course he would find something, somewhere, and if it should be near old friends, so much the better; but he had formulated no plans. Then Paul entered his life, with constant references to his home and his cousin Marcia, and took undisputed possession of him, and linked him in the most natural way with all his future arrange ments.

Paul did not know it, but Erle had made a few little purchases which might please the fancy of some woman, and as he dropped them into his trunk he had said to himself: "Perhaps I may find some one to give them to." And though he did not say so, he vaguely hoped it would be Marcia. If he had analyzed his feelings, he would have found that a certain indefinite ideal, which he called, "Marcia," was taking a firmer hold upon his thoughts of the new life, than any other person or thing. He was boyishly

intent on the meeting, now so near, and more eager for it than he would have cared to acknowledge even to himself; he was restless; he walked the long deck from end to end, over and over. The steamer seemed to creep over the miles still between them and the dock. He began teasing a group of children, whose friend he had been all through the voyage. He was pitiably impatient to tread again the stones of his native city; pitiably, since it was not a home-coming for him, as it should have been; for his family knew nothing of his movements and Erle was aware that both mother and sisters were out of town for the season.

At last they reached the pier. The two young men went through the usual routine of securing their baggage; lunched and then having ascertained the time of their probable arrival at Jones' Point, High County, where Marcia spent much of her time, they telegraphed ahead, and spent their

surplus energy in various excursions here and there for things which Paul thought might be needed to make their stay in the mountains, so early in the season, endurable. At last, as the result of all this activity of brain and muscle, sundry odd-looking packages were visible, suggestive of long days out of doors. A lot of paper-covered books, not necessarily novels, for one can get anything in that shape now. A knot of hammocks, a heavy cane, with which came printed instructions for its evolution into an artist's stool; artist's paraphernalia, in all shapes and sizes and guises; a guitar, which Paul had taken to playing of late and countless, nameless odds and ends. These the young men finally stowed away and found themselves en route for Jones' Point.

"Here you! Tom Turner!" called the agent, coming out of the telegraph office in Rocton, the nearest railroad station to Jones' Point. A half-grown boy came lazily

over from a freight car, which was standing near.

"Here, you take this yere message up to James Burns on the mountain; near Jones' Point, don't you know?"

"You guess I do? You 'spose I'm goin' up there this time o' day? Why it's a three mile climb through the gully, straight up, and seven round the horseshoe, way most people goes. It's nigh on to five o'clock now."

"Get a horse then and be quick about it; they'll pay." And the agent went in leaving the boy to ruminate.

"Guess I'll get James' colt, I can ride him;" he finally concluded gravely, and started slowly off.

Marcia Hunt, sketching in the little clearing, half a mile from the house, down the gully toward Rocton, saw the sunlight fading away across the open slope. The shadows crept, inch by inch, over the short green grass. The long stretch of wagon road, run-

ning off through the woods on each side, had lost its enticing lights and shadows and was quite dark before she put up her sketching materials and rose to go home. She heard the sound of a horse's hoofs on the bridge, further down the gully and hastened her steps. It might be a neighbor with the mail. She walked on slowly, up the mountain, and soon the horse and rider came in sight. She did not know the boy, but he, half knowing and half guessing who she was, and glad to save the steep climb to the house, called out to her: "Say, you folks lookin' for a tel'-graph d'spatch?"

"I don't know," said Marcia.

"Jest look and see ef this is yourn, will you?" And Tom handed her the dispatch, directed to herself. She tore it open, read it and turned to go.

"Guess I'll want a dollar, Miss, for this here colt." Marcia, without a word, handed him the money and again hurried on. When she

came out at last, to the edge of the cleared land where several small farm houses were clustered, the lights were already beginning to shine in the windows. She passed the first house and paused a moment to look over at the great wall of rocks on the east. They were already indistinct in the twilight, but she gazed intently as though she would pierce the gloom. She loved those rocks, with a strange, wild love, as though they hid some human thing behind their impenetrable fronts. Her imagination was fed and her soul strengthened by them. After a moment she turned and her eyes swept slowly along the horizon. For three miles below ran a deep, wild break in the hills toward the town of Rocton. To the right, the fields rolled gently over to the west, dotted with orchards and houses. The settlement was one of the oldest in the country and many a story was told of the days when the Indians brought terror to these homes.

The long, hard ascent from the village below seemed to have exhausted the energies of the few who lived and died and were buried here. It had checked the possibility of anything like enterprise; even the little graveyard on the knoll, in the meadow to the left, indicated respect for the dead at the least possible exertion.

Nor had these people lacked the spirit of industry; there was a primitive simplicity about them and their ways of living which made them a study of never-ending interest to Marcia. They presented a wholesome contrast to the side of life of which she knew the most, and while she was gracefully tolerant of their lack of worldly wisdom she loved their inherent goodness.

The road where Marcia stood ran between the grassy bank and a long line of old unpainted sheds and buildings which had been added one to another as years brought the need for them. A cooper's shop, a black-

smith's forge and a wagon shed, jostled each other with a wonderful lack of perpendicular and horizontal lines.

And Marcia found delight in studying the old structures, and peopling them with fancies which set them astir with a quaint, idealistic life.

As Marcia approached Mr. Burns' house, which was beyond the terrace, where her rooms were located, she found him seated on the frame of the grindstone, under the woodshed, evidently awaiting her, and over his good Scotch face beamed a smile of welcome.

The orphan lass was dear to him. Many a time he had wondered why he was not blessed with a daughter and whether she would have been like this girl. He, like the rest of the men up here, had fallen into contemplative habits of mind as the natural outgrowth of the slow life with its enforced quiet. He would sit by the half-hour near her, in the fields or the house, and watch her as she

worked, speculating on what her future would be. Sometimes he would say a few words, which would show the drift of his thoughts.

"I would like to see you mistress of a big place, with plenty to do your bidding, Miss Marcia," he would say. Then she would laugh and reply:

"Oh, it will be all right. I know very well that I will get what I deserve, and when I am equal to it all, it will come, no doubt."

Such was her cheerful, optimistic view of things, and results always bore her out in her belief.

But she could not live without being loved. Had she failed to get affection and the expression of it from the hearts of those good people she would have felt that there was something radically wrong with life.

"O Mr. Burns, Paul and his friend are coming to-night. Here is the despatch. What shall we do?" she said going over and giving him the message.

"I will go. I have time yet to meet the train." He moved off, then stopping abruptly, he turned and mysteriously beckoned her to him.

"Miss Marcia, may be he'll be taking you off with him, when he goes, who knows?"

"How do you know I'd go with him?" a half happy, half defiant look on her face.

"To be sure, may be not, why no, may be not," and he walked away smiling.

"Here, wife," he called at the side door, "Mr. Paul and his friend are coming to-night, could you get me a bite to eat, while I hitch the team?"

Marcia entered the house and began to aid in putting the meal on the table; a fresh vivacity, born of anticipation, bubbling over in countless attractive little ways and speeches.

"Must not the lord of the house have the best?" "Is not the wanderer returning to us?" "And then, too, the stranger that is to

be within our gates; shall he not have the best?" "And aside from all this I am hungry as a savage myself."

Mrs. Burns, a keen little woman, full of life and energy, with wonderful, wavy, red-brown hair, softened and subdued by the gray which had but recently asserted itself, laughed, and nodded, and smiled, and brought out her best Java and began to make a pot for the supper. She was always responsive to Marcia's moods.

"You delicious little woman," said Marcia, "you mean to brace me up well for this occasion. Oh! yes, thank you, you may count on two cups for me. And this bread and butter of yours—well! rest assured they haven't tasted anything like it over there among their macaroni-loving Italians, their tea-drinking Russians and their beer-consuming Germans. Let us surprise them to-night. Give them your best silver and cut glass. And that lovely damask, and, Busy Bee,"

which was Marcia's name for her, "you shall not turn me out for a drone. I shall help."

In the sunshine and love of this delightful home nook, Marcia had planted herself and taken root, to grow, unhindered.

"How your dear father, the doctor, did like a strong cup of this coffee, my dear," said Mrs. Burns as she poured out a second one for Marcia. "Yes, that he did," she continued, "and he said that it never seemed to hurt people up here."

"How could it," replied Marcia, "in such a charmed atmosphere, where nerves are always strung in tune."

"Many a time," went on Mrs. Burns, taking pleasure in the memory, "in the long rides he was called to take over these hills, he used to stop for a few moments' chat with us and I generally managed to have a cup ready before he left."

"What a friend we all lost in him."

"Ah! Marcia, we loved your father. He was a good man."

Through the open window the genial face of Mr. Burns appeared, questioning;

"Come, Miss Marcia, don't you want to go down with me for the lads?"

He hoped to get her to share his lonely ride.

"Now, James how can you want that child to take that long jaunt," said Busy Bee.

She was able to do it twenty times over, but Mrs. Burns had plans of her own. She wanted her to appear at her best before the stranger.

"She must stay home and get ready. Go along, you'll be late." Mr. Burns turned away reluctantly, and the two women, left to themselves, began at once the many preparations they had yet to make for the guests.

They had hardly expected Paul and Erle till the morrow.

"I will light the fire in the parlor and set

the table, and—" began Marcia, but Mrs. Burns broke in: "No you won't, we will do it together. What shall I get for their supper?"

"Oh, eggs and toast and some cold ham and coffee, and milk and cake, and—well—what more could a prince want?"

At last Mrs. Burns dismissed Marcia, sending her home to dress.

She went out of the door leading to the porch.

A hammock was swinging to and fro between the side of the house and one of the outer posts of the porch. Marcia felt restless. At another time she would have gone home immediately to make a careful toilet; but to-night she threw herself into the hammock and turned her face toward the stars. She swayed nervously back and forth, catching great deep breaths of the pure fresh air. It soothed her with its touches and yet poured into her throbbing veins a new life

current. She had never been stirred by any great passion. All the charms of her rounded womanhood were latent, unclaimed and apparently unnoticed.

Theories were unsatisfying things to live with alone, day by day, and to-night her heart seemed to beat warningly. She had felt before the possibilities of life in a broader field, but had put them away as not for her.

The men she came most in contact with were so far below the man she had known best and loved devotedly, her father, that they did not often stir her admiration to a marked degree, and when they did they were always men so busy in the work of life that they had no time to allow any attraction she held for them to ripen into more than cordial liking.

She could not help wondering what this friend of Paul's would be like. Of course she would be kind and gracious to him, because he was Paul's friend. Perhaps he would be

a man to be patient with, because of his inability to see and understand things except from a superficial standpoint.

It was not likely there was any good she could do for him. She would not think of him at all, if it were not to please Paul. He might be very tiresome when brought to the test of every-day companionship, for a whole month, the period Paul had suggested as the probable length of their stay.

Perhaps,—yes, it was very probable he was the kind of man who would call all her thoughts "bosh" and wish her—well—anywhere—so be it he was not there

She would soon know.

For more than an hour she had been swinging in the hammock, and her thoughts, like it, had been swaying to and fro, now approaching a conclusion and now receding into uncertainty.

She went down the road to her rooms, up the stairs, changed her dress and put some

blossoms in her belt, then she came down and stood in her cozy parlor by the little old-fashioned centre table, in the centre of the room, with its square-cornered leaves, and a cover which was one of Marcia's heirlooms; a fine old chintz, tinted in all the spring greens and sprayed with quaint designs of intensely erratic impossible flowers.

The shaded lamp was painted in the same tints and Marcia's household gods lay close around it.

A copy of Emerson's essays, a volume of Longfellow's poems, another of Mrs. Browning's and what to her is first and best, a New Testament. Some would have criticised unpleasantly at once at catching sight of this, for it was the new version.

A book of clever sketches, a bit of sewing and a bowl of beautiful wild orchids completed the *ensemble* which pleased the eye while yielding a sort of insight to the soul of the possessor.

The little yellow and brown jackets of the orchids filled the room with a perfume as delicate as that of violets, and as they lay in their bowl of India-blue china, they suggested a handful of materialized day dreams.

Marcia was beautiful to look at, with her dark eyes, her brows uplifted, her luxuriant hair, her fresh bright face and in her figure a beauty of repose which was really its chief attraction. Her black dress was relieved only by a cluster of delicate hepatica blossoms, extending from her belt to her throat, tinted like the storm clouds of an April day, from which they always seemed to have sprung.

She took up her Longfellow almost caressingly, and held it a moment, then laid it down lingeringly, as one might release the hand of a friend.

Her thoughts drifted again to this stranger, upon whose coming she had allowed her mind to linger so much. Again she wondered

how they would impress each other, and whether, as her Emerson says:

"Jove would nod to Jove from behind them."

Would she like him well enough, for Paul's sake, to find the real man in him, and would he care to know the real woman in her?

It was not likely. As for her, she could not show her true inner self readily, and few had attempted to look for or ask it.

As she listened, a far-off dog barked, then all was still. Suddenly she heard the rumble of wheels on the little mountain bridge, and went quickly out into the night; hurrying over to the Burns', where Paul and Erle were to room, and where she took her meals. She glanced into the large shed which served as a summer kitchen and called: "Busy Bee."

Mrs. Burns came forward and Marcia took her hand and drew her out. Together they stood, waiting. In a few moments the carriage came in sight, and Erle took his first

glimpse of Paul's cousin. With that first glimpse came the question: "Is she more than a cousin to Paul?"

He watched closely the meeting in the moonlight. The lovely laughing face with its frame of soft, curling, rebellious locks, did not seem to have changed its exquisite color for a deeper shade, if he might depend upon the moonlight, and Marcia had turned from Paul's salutation instantly, to greet him.

She met him in a happy, cordial way, turning up her face to scan his, frankly allowing her curiosity to satisfy itself. Each seemed to divine the thoughts of the other, for both were laughing before they had exchanged a word.

"It was very good of you to come with Paul; he loves you so," said Marcia, as she went toward the porch with Erle, where Paul and Mrs. Burns had preceded them, and opened the door into the room which served

as a parlor, and in which a fire burned cheerily on the hearth.

"See! here is our ingleside and there are your rooms," she said pointing to the doors opposite, "as soon as you are ready, come out and have some supper. Mrs. Burns is waiting."

She went into the next room and busied herself about the supper table.

"Paul, where are you and what are you doing?" she called at length.

"Here, Marcia, talking with Busy Bee; she wants me to tell her all my travels in a breath. How sweet you look to-night. It never struck me that you were pretty before."

"Joy at your return has beatified me, perhaps, temporarily. I never was pretty, you know, Paul," laughed Marcia.

Erle, coming slowly from the inner room, heard the last words. He looked at her in the stronger lamp light and thought: "No, not pretty perhaps, but something better."

She was still slight and girlish in figure, though she had reached twenty-five; Erle was thirty. Paul had said much, but after all he had never touched on what struck Erle now as her chief attraction, the beauty of her expression, which played over her face, ever varying, yet ever revealing a more potent charm.

Erle, scientist and almost agnostic as he was, acknowledged the presence of an ennobling element which was more than mental superiority; it was a beauty of the heart, and he felt curious to know more of the depths, which he felt must exist in the nature before him.

What experiences of life had brought that refined beauty of expression into her face? Had she given a woman's wonderful love to some man, not half worthy of it? So many lovable women make that mistake.

No one was saying very much to Erle just now. The others were busy over happy little

incidents of Paul's trip, and though they tried to draw him into the conversation, the effort was a failure, for he was absorbed in a mental scrutiny of Marcia and was trying to fit his preconceptions of her to this living, breathing reality before him.

He had fancied she might be brusque, almost repellant perhaps, from Paul's suggestion that he might not like her.

Did he not say she did not strike all people alike?

And Erle felt a thrill of gladness that she did not. She would be surrounded by suitors, did they all see her as he did.

She was simply radiant, with that sweet, tender smile, those bright, laughing eyes, that tempting color, now cooling, now glowing in her cheeks, and the entire absence of any apparent egotism.

He had begun to lend himself rather gladly to his first idea of her, and now to find it so completely swept away by this real creature,

so much above his dreams, abashed him. He had almost assured himself of success in winning the regard of that other one, the girl he had thought she would be.

This Marcia was a revelation to him. He felt the limitations of his past, and could not rise beyond its level, all at once.

And yet she inspired in him a strange, sweet hope. Perhaps near her—with her always in sight, always close at hand, to stimulate him, he might attain possession of that faith, hope and love, the belief in which he had almost thought best to put aside, with other childish things; but in losing which he began to see that all color and glow would vanish from his life.

It had once occurred to him that no agnostic could become a sailor and yet retain his agnosticism. Contending daily with winds and waves, he would hope and believe in something, before he had sailed one trip out, and now he realized that Marcia's words

might be to him as wind and waves, encouraging or defeating him.

"Dr. Erle," Marcia broke in upon his revery, "your photograph hardly tells the truth about you."

"My photograph? I did not know you had seen one." And Erle smiled such a pleased surprise that Marcia, glancing across at Paul, saw in wonder that there was a mystery.

The truth was, Paul had never said much to Marcia of Erle and Erle knew it, and that he had taken the trouble to forward his photograph did not look as though—well he did not know yet, whether they cared for each other with the usual cousinly regard or something more. But the pleasure of this discovery, that she had thought of him at all, made him happy. And, though they exchanged only commonplaces now and then through the evening, when he bade her good night at her own door and caught a glimpse

of the lighted table within, he felt all chance of dulness at Jones' Point had vanished.

And Marcia, what of her?

She had found a man whose power of pleasing her was not limited to one evening. She had no wish to look further now. She would take the future on trust, happy in not having, as usual, measured the man's limitations in a few hours.

As Erle walked back to the house, he smiled at the vigorous mental catechism to which he was subjecting himself, and when he asked himself why he did it, he found a ready reply in the fact that Paul was his friend and Marcia—Paul's dearest relative. Yet that did not seem to explain why he wished morning were already come that he might atone for his apparent listlessness. He had taken so little part in their evening's talk, that now, when it was too late to redeem himself, he realized that he had probably made an unfavorable impression and he did

not quite know why he regretted it so much. Such things heretofore had been, comparatively, matters of indifference.

"Ah! Well!" he said, "I have a month for penance, if need be," and then walked up the steps into the house.

The next day, as Marcia went down and out into the morning, she lingered a moment at the steps. Standing there, in her gray dress and hat, against a background of lilac blooms, with the delicate color and perfume of apple blossoms around and above her, she made the sweetest of pictures, not purposely, but because she was naturally and unconsciously a part of the picturesque.

Erle, who had been astir for an hour, saw her and felt the spring-like beauty of the picture.

"Oh, for the skill of an artist that my future might be assured, by reproducing the picture I see before me," he exclaimed.

"I should insist upon a postponement of

the first sitting, Dr. Erle," she replied smiling. "Doesn't breakfast find any place in your thoughts this morning?"

"Evidently there will be no opportunity to practice my profession while such appetites prevail," said Erle. Marcia smiled again and breaking off a wee spray of the fresh lilac blossoms she came down the steps from the bank on which the low, long house stood.

"The little spray is intended—?" questioned Erle.

"For your button hole," answered Marcia.

With the shadows from the old, black-walnut tree playing over them, they stood together while she fastened it for him. Then they sauntered slowly up the road to the little white house with green blinds, where breakfast was waiting for them.

For a half-hour they chatted over the fresh rolls and butter, the fragrant coffee and cream, and the tempting morsels which look so unpalatable when ordered from a

bill of fare, but which whet to its keenest edge the appetite, when served in a country house where the mountain breezes blow in through the open windows, laden with the scent of wild flowers and woodland blossoms.

The door opened and Mrs. Burns came in. She sat down opposite Erle and turned her face, with its keen, good-humored eyes full upon him.

"So you have come up here to stay a month, doctor?"

"That is the intention, Mrs. Burns, if you don't turn us out."

Mrs. Burns gave an emphatic nod and then she said with a smile, and quaint little turn of the head peculiar to her: "What do you think, Marcia? Will we turn them out?"

"Time alone can tell," laughed Marcia.

Mrs. Burns was a woman of fine perceptions, good judgment and an experience of life not always measured by her present surroundings. She had already formed her

opinion of John Erle, as correctly, in a general way, as though she had known him a year. Had any one asked her for it she would have answered briefly: "He is genuine."

No higher praise could be given by her than this. In this crucible of honesty did she melt all people and things, and if dross was there she soon found it and while she covered it with the broad mantle of Christian love, an insincere nature could never find itself installed in her household on any footing of friendship.

This little, middle-aged woman, for twenty years at home upon this lonely mountain, was a woman of genius. She possessed the faculty of drawing into her home, by some magnetism of her own, people of talent, of taste, of culture, and once having entered, they found themselves appreciated, their fancies charmed and their minds fixed in the desire to return and find renewal of vigor in

this bracing moral atmosphere, which some way partook of, and was a part of the clear sky, pure air, fresh breezes and health-giving nature of the mountain itself.

Her character was partly the outcome of long communion with the glorious nature around her.

Her "genuine" meant real, everlasting—like the rocks—therefore God-like; the only thing to be desired.

Erle, though a man of the world and a traveller, was full of wonder at this peculiar bit of thoroughly American atmosphere and its odd mingling of foreign culture.

He could not understand fully the child-like delight and happy abandon to the present of Marcia's bright face and light laugh. He was tingling with the longing to turn the tide of this bright nature toward himself, but how?

He was far off from her. Paul, Mrs. Burns, the birds, the trees, the skies, all held

a share in her, but he, none. He would beguile her into showing him her inner self; perhaps he could meet that with a sympathy all his own.

"Come," said Paul at last, springing up, "let's go somewhere."

Marcia, toying with a great Saint Bernard, sitting beside her, rose slowly, with her hand still upon the dog's head. She lifted her finger warningly at Paul, and said:

"We must husband our resources if Dr. Erle would tax them for a month. So it must not be the Point we seek to-day."

"Oh, no, that can wait. I want some views from South Hill. You and Erle can do the picturesque for me, if you will. I want to try my new camera."

This was an undeveloped amusement with Paul, as yet, and when he thought he had found just the spot for a good stand and had drawn the others after him, with much difficulty, he was sure to abandon it in a few

moments and rush off in a manner which some would have called a reckless expenditure of energy.

They had wandered for hours, led by Paul's vacillating fancies, assisting him in all his efforts to secure good views of favorite nooks, and obeying all his impetuous directions with most praiseworthy diligence, when they were joined by one of the neighboring farmers. His primitive imagination running wild with him, he had mistaken them for a surveying party, and visions of a new railroad and a rise in the price of land had drawn him to them. Erle and Marcia drew to one side and left Paul to explain, while they quietly made the most of the moment, and sank down, one on a fallen tree the other on a ragged rock, and lost themselves in the mutual delight of question and answer.

"Miss Hunt," said Erle as they watched Paul striding here and there in the distance, "this running away from home as I did, is

not just the thing for us young Americans who mean to be good citizens, is it?"

"Do you regret it?" asked Marcia.

"If I had the choice again, I would stay here," replied Erle.

"Why," said Marcia, turning suddenly.

"Oh, there is everything we need at home, now, and a man gets out of sympathy with too much."

"Have you?" she asked, so directly that Erle looked away and not waiting for his answer, she added:

"We will try to bring you back again."

"I wish you would," he responded and then he pulled a cigar out of his pocket, looked at it absently, and put it away again.

"Oh, I will forgive you if you smoke. The wind is blowing away from me," Marcia said, laughing at his unconscious hint.

So he lit his cigar and smoked lazily, puffing up clouds of rings and watching them disperse.

Marcia drew a little book from her pocket and with a few rapid strokes and touches caught the lazy pose of his figure with the cloud of smoke above. Holding it before him she said gayly: "There, that is Dr. Erle, minus home sympathies—by-and-by I will make you a companion sketch—when you have reformed."

"Ah!" cried Paul joining them, "I have caught you both in a capital bit; don't move now. If that rock and tree, behind you, come out in good tone, I shall be happy."

Then seeing the sketch Marcia had made: "You have a characteristic thing there; how much better you work than you did when I went away."

"I enjoy it; so much goes into a few touches," said Marcia as she slipped the book back into her pocket.

"So much goes into a few touches," repeated Paul and he nodded as he settled his

camera, and exposed the negative. "Now let's go home."

"Here, I'll help you, old boy." And Erle shouldered a portion of Paul's load and together they moved slowly homeward.

"This is the laziest atmosphere I was ever in," said Erle turning to Marcia. "I feel as though I had not an idea left which was not a sleepy one."

"That is always the way at first," she said. "You will recover after a while; but I love even the sleepy days. Life is very sweet up here."

To Erle's praise be it said that he was a novice in all the little arts of pleasing women. He had lived only for his profession, as yet. All he asked from the other sex was that they should let him alone and when they had proved unreasonable he had left them and gone stolidly on.

The time had now come when he would have liked to feel that he could charm if he chose.

When love's awakening reaches a certain point, with men like Erle, it acts like an inspiration, producing, on the instant, all the trivial by-play of the affections and shaping each action to itself until the glorious outburst of all the faculties makes the happy lover more than the ordinary man he has been till then.

Erle had not advanced far enough for this, and as day followed day he only felt his way slowly toward a knowledge of what would please and attract Marcia. Had any one confronted him with the question: "Are you in love?" he would promptly have denied it even to himself.

Paul would have answered differently before five days had passed. He and Erle were always off together somewhere or seemed to be so, yet Paul often strayed to a neighboring house or found some work which separated them for an occasional half-day.

So Marcia, true to her first determination

and also to something else which was new, set herself the not unpleasant task of entertaining Paul's friend.

Excursions to one place and another had been planned and carried out, yet Marcia had never taken Erle to the Point, from which she had so often watched the sunset and where she had built so many castles. Somehow she felt that she must save that place for a particular mood which had not yet come to her since Erle's arrival.

One afternoon he said: "Miss Marcia;" sometimes it was Marcia, now, but always hurriedly and half-forgetfully, as though it arose from hearing Paul and Mrs. Burns address her thus—"Miss Marcia, is the time not yet ripe for a sunset view from the Point?" Marcia hesitated an instant, then held out her hand to him and led the way.

PART SECOND.

"Thine was the prophet's vision, thine
The exultation, the divine
Insanity of noble minds,
That never falters, nor abates,
But labors and endures and waits
Till all that it foresees, it finds,
Or what it cannot find creates."

LONGFELLOW.

THE buzzing of the bees in the flowers, the soft gurgle of the little spots of moisture, as the warm earth disturbs them in her breathing, the slight sound of movement on every side, which one never hears after early spring; all this sweet commotion which nature makes as she brews her nectar for spring's uses; all this imparted its spell of fresh living to these two, as they went on in it, as in an enchanted land.

"Miss Hunt, what do you and Paul find to draw you to this lonely wilderness?" said Erle.

"Fresh air, solitude and tender associations. Is not that sufficient?"

There was a dainty, harmless coquetry in her manner as she answered, which melted so charmingly into the earnest, that what she said acquired new interest as one watched her.

"Yes, but why should you wish solitude?" persisted Erle, bent upon making her talk.

"Because life, Doctor, has been made a very serious thing for me." She smiled as she spoke and was silent.

"Why more serious for you than other women?" he asked, looking at so much of her face as was toward him.

"I often ask myself that question and can find but the one answer. It is just. The law of compensation must be met."

"What must be compensated for?" said Erle, smiling.

"God has given me the power of seeing what others do not always see and He re-

quires more from me. I have dared to hope I may make the world a little better for having lived in it."

"But what do you see which others do not, that so much should be asked from you again?"

Erle was astonished to find himself questioning Marcia boldly in this way. But she was unlike other women he knew.

He did not care to decide in just what way this difference existed, but he felt and yielded to it.

There is a craving in every well-regulated nature for a sympathetic help at certain periods of one's development, at certain crises in one's life, at the strongest or weakest moments of all the varied phases of growth.

And Erle was in a transition state. His character had not yet crystallized. He was aware of a disturbance of some kind, but he did not know just what it portended.

Marcia's personality happened to be more

real to him at the time than that of any other woman, and any one with a knowledge of human nature could have surmised the result. Erle craved her as his friend. Again he was unaware of himself; nothing was clear in his sense, of either his needs or his desires. It is the glorious possibility of life which gives it its greatest zest, while the command to work remains; it is not so much the attainment of an end as its attaining which delights us.

"What do I see?" repeated Marcia. "Dr. Erle, if you question me in this way, I must answer you truthfully and I do not like to talk of myself. I am over sensitive in this respect perhaps; whenever I have thrown my soul into words, it has only been to be misunderstood, and to find what has been sacred to me profaned by others from whom I hoped it would command respect, so that now I am slow to speak. Had we not better talk of broader subjects, the flowers, the birds or

these helpless young moths just out of bondage?"

As she spoke she turned her eyes, full of such sweet, earnest questioning upon him, that he forgot the light sarcasm lurking in her tone and words, and answered only the spirit of the look.

"No, Miss Hunt, I promise you at least respect, if you will answer me. What are these things you see?"

As he spoke their eyes met. She had sought his face to know how far she might give utterance to that which was crying out in her. A steady light shone in his eyes now, unknown perhaps to himself, but which flashed out, merged its life with hers and made it impossible for her to withhold her confidence, though how much she might or might not say she was not sure.

"I read secrets in the book of life which are appalling. If I live with people a little while, the very motives of their souls are as

apparent to me as are the marks upon my hand," she said, turning her palm up to look at it. "If there is evil I see it. If there is good I know it and all without direct volition on my part. It is truth, I cannot turn away from it."

She gave a little sigh.

Erle saw that Marcia spoke with effort. It had not been easy for her to confide even that much of herself to him. His profession had forced him to feel that the evil in life predominated. The constant contact with its different phases had almost killed the ideal in him.

He had not that strength, drawn from a higher source, which alone can make the ideal brighter and purer, as the fight between the evil and the good goes on. He thought such fresh sweetness as this which he saw before him now was not to be reconciled with his views of life, as formed from his experience.

"Miss Hunt, you cannot know life as I know it, or you would feel you had undertaken a hopeless task when you think to better this world of ours, all alone."

Marcia wondered if it were well to venture the only answer she could honestly give. Should she again drop down the sounding line into the heart of this man, whom she felt she would rather not fathom so soon? It was so pleasant to look at him and fancy he might be the friend for whom she had longed. She might put an immeasurable distance between them if she showed the heights of her hopes. She dared not think he would divine her meaning at the very first, even though he might in the aftertime.

At length she said: "I am not alone; help is always given me when I need and ask it."

They were entering a narrower stretch of road running between borders of witch hazel, birch and other young trees and shrubs, and the enticing sunlight, dancing in their tops,

surprising and beguiling anew at each turn, entered like wine into Erle's spirit, intensifying, each moment, his interest and his pleasure in the hour. For the present all doubts of Marcia's freedom had vanished and he gave himself up to his impulse to follow where she led, let the consequences be what they would. He might, at least, come to know himself the better, and establish himself on a better footing with her.

"You have not told me yet why you choose solitude? Can you not work just as well among others? Better indeed?"

"I only come here at times." There was a long pause. Erle feared to speak lest she might not continue.

"I am not always strong. People draw on me and weaken me once in a while. Human nature cannot bear the constant strain upon it in the crowded world; it must escape to the mountains."

A comradeship was already established be-

tween these two, born of the fresh intense life of the one and the real need of the other.

Erle, instead of being repelled, as most men might have been by the intense earnestness he had succeeded in arousing, rejoiced in it. It had cost something for her to show it to him. It was a glimpse at her inner nature. and this was what he sought.

Suddenly he said to her: "You have told me much of yourself to-day, but you have only awakened a desire to know still more, Miss Marcia."

"How?" she asked with a real wonder in her wide shining eyes.

"I am curious to know what it will all end in."

"If I live it will end in some good done. In nothing mean," she said.

"You show me grand fancies, purity and breadth of nature, and high hopes for the success of too much, but experience, and—" he paused here as if in thought, but she

urged him to go on— "and a few years more of life will find you bereft of your illusions, as have been so many other dreamers, unless you are made of rare stuff," he added, half reluctantly.

"My illusions have faded already," she answered.

"I know now that truth lies in the mean of life," he said. "I no longer believe that people are either all bad or all good, there is always a mingling of the two elements, and I must be strong enough to see and be content with life as I find it. You all indulge in theories which are beyond the power of human nature to fulfil."

"Ah!" she said, "now you have touched my secret. It is not human nature in which my dreams find fulfilment."

"Pardon me, but indeed I do not understand you," he answered, turning and looking at her.

He had been talking in an almost listless

way until now, looking off over the hills and country down below them and seeming to express his thoughts lazily as one does with a child when helping to lay out a simple block puzzle often made before.

"I dream and work now for the divine, for the kingdom which is to come upon the earth, is even now begun and is with us;" she replied, without turning her head or moving her gaze from a rift in the clouds, through which the sun, now quite low, half looked at them.

"Still I don't understand," he said.

They were on the top of the cliff now; she was sitting on one of the ramparts of this stronghold of the rocks; Erle half lay, half sat upon the level stone beside her. He must keep close to hear what she was saying. Up there the wind was always strong and somewhat noisy. Her presence sent a thrill through every fibre of his being. Never before had the simple fact of a woman's near-

ness moved him so. He would not seek to keep back anything she might unconsciously demand of him.

"Is human nature the only force you find working in this world?" questioned Marcia. "Do you not find something which is not in your own nature, cropping up and influencing your actions now and then? Have you not seen people do noble things from motives you could not fully understand but yet admired?"

"Yes, I have, Miss Marcia, but not often; such people are rare."

"Was the world any better for what they did, Doctor?"

"Y-e-s," assented Erle very slowly. He began to see now, how she meant to better it.

"Have you never been stirred by a great love, so great that you would give all you hold dearest if you could, by so doing, benefit the one you loved?"

As she spoke she met his eyes fastened on

her in a questioning way. There was a hungry, appealing look in them which startled her. She looked away and continued. "I see you have not yet learned this lesson. I cannot tell you what I mean, I fear. Only the knowledge of such a love could explain what I mean. You must be touched by a power, not of earth, else you could not comprehend it."

She sighed as if over a hopeless task and looked at the rift in the clouds.

"I might feel a love like that some day. Will you not go on and explain?" asked Erle seriously.

"Might you?" she queried and once more the possible sweetness of life flashed over her. "Then I will try. It would be foolish for one to go to you at such a time and forbid you to do actual evil to the person you loved, because you could only think and wish to do good. Is it not so?"

"Yes, of course, it would be very foolish."

"Well, don't you see that, for the time being, you would have become a part of the eternal goodness, in a certain line incapable of wrong. To love thus is unconsciously to fulfill all law. You do all that could be asked from you and you are on the borders of the heavenly kingdom. Now, if you could only lift up this love from the creature to the Creator then you would have entered in. You would thenceforth dream and work for the Divine. Do you see?"

"Half way; as we see the sun there. You mean that such love transcends and expands human nature."

"Yes, it proclaims a power beyond which is the Divine, the power which is to rule by-and-by."

"Why do you not write a book and tell people what you wish them to know?"

"My time has not yet come. I dare not write till I have first lived more nearly as I would wish them to. The world is already

too full of books spun from men's fancies. There is plenty of brain and muscle afloat among the writers and printers, but too little of the purity and beauty of spirit animating it all. When I have proved myself, then and only then may I turn and share with the world that which is worthy of sharing. Then I shall feel surer I have something to give which it needs, until then I must keep silence. Shall we go home?"

This girl, as she rose up and looked at him, was unlike any one he had ever seen before, and he questioned himself vainly for the secret of it.

She had been as full of changes, during this spring day, as had the clouds in the soft sky or the tints upon the landscape, or the vanishing shadows which the sun and clouds had kept varying each moment.

Marcia had allowed herself to be wrought upon by some unknown element in this new nature until, without being aware of it, she

was under an intense strain, such as nature never bears long at a time without resenting it. Hers was an exceptional nature. It took a long time to produce and mature its buds to a certain point, then suddenly, when the time was ripe, they would bloom into perfection with wonderful rapidity and gloriously, like the flowers that reach perfect development in a single night; astonishing herself even more than another, because she alone knew the long and weary, almost hopeless waiting which had been necessary before any tangible result was attained.

To-day had been a blossoming day for her. She had wondered lightly how she was to touch this new soul. She found now that she was to reach it only by and through her best and fullest confidence. Unconsciously he had led her up to express herself in a clearer, stronger light and more perfect detail than she had even thought in before, and thus a new beauty and enthusiasm had en-

tered her soul and had left an impression upon her which would not fade with the rising of to-morrow's sun, but which would remain and be a part of her.

In her answer to the question, "What will it all end in?" she rang out the key note of her character. "In some good done, if I live." An ideal once formed, she never rested until on the way to attain it.

Idea and action, dream and reality must link themselves for her, no matter what sacrifice stood in the pathway.

Two weeks had gone by almost unheeded. Alarmed by the expressions into which she had been betrayed that first day on the rocks, Marcia had tried to put the unusual seriousness of her character as far off from her present as possible; and the happy, careless part of her nature had since been allowed full sway.

Unlike most women of the day she had not grown to question the conclusions of life, so

far as they pertained to herself, beyond a certain frontage of the possible, which had come to loom up before her consciousness as the rocks loomed up over there against the sky; and the unalterableness of which she had accepted in the same way.

She had found there were certain unchangeable conditions of her mental and spiritual structure which made it impossible for her to sin against the ideal, without first sacrificing an inherited perception of right. She had made her choice with an instinctive shrinking from the necessary hardships attending it.

Young though she was at the time when she met and conquered her fate (if one may so say), she was only a girl on the threshold of life; her victory had been entire; she had chosen to yield herself to all the forces for good which had lent themselves in the forming of her being; she had joined herself determinedly to the unseen world, out of

which she had sprung, and with which she knew her relations were more sure and real than any she might ever make in the material world about her. In short she had chosen an allegiance to the ideal which she knew was at direct variance with many conditions of the world and society around her, and through which her way led.

It was the truest heroism which entered into and led this young soul, quivering in every delicate, sensitive, gracious womanly fibre.

She might never swerve from the highest in her purpose. That she should be mistaken in her perceptions of this she felt would be impossible, if she but held close the divine hand stretched out to her. That she might be mistaken in her methods of attaining it she knew to be probable, and that her world would be often against her was a fact which fell crushingly upon her from the first.

But child as she was, in soul, she yielded

herself to the requirements of the Everlasting One and went forward.

Erle was coming slowly to a nearer perception of her than had any man before. Instead of finding, as he first supposed, the outlines of her being clearly set and defined, he began to perceive that they could not be measured by any mere earthly vision. They were like those of other heavenly bodies, to be discovered only by long and patient investigation and then through a spiritual lens, as it were.

It had become the all-important question with Erle as to whether he might so purify his vision as ever fully to attain a perception of her life in all its varied phases.

There had come a certain veil of materialism across his instincts which now shadowed all his perceptions. He had until now thought it the inevitable result of knowledge.

But he began to see it came because he had set too close a limit to his knowledge.

He had not given his facts field enough. Science itself was often being enlarged by marginal notations. Suddenly he caught a glimpse of his possibilities, running beyond the finite.

If any one thinks this isolated mountain life was limited in its opportunities for dramatic action, so necessary in romance, they must consider that the most interesting dramas of life are lived first in the world of ideas. Is it not in the formation of motive that our keenest interest centres?

Thus neither Erle nor Marcia had found a lack of interest in the life of the past two weeks. Erle in the early and late mists, which drew away the mountain from the rest of the world around, began and ended his days in an atmosphere of continual consecration to this new search for the highest possible in him.

He was seeking to regain, if he might, his instinctive perceptions of things. It had

become a matter of course for Marcia and Erle to watch the sunset from the hills, and Erle had come to look forward to this as the best part of the day.

He had gotten in a way of lying near her, stretched by her side, his gaze, perhaps, on the clouds, but all his thoughts centred on her.

To-night they were looking out upon a realm of purple and golden splendor. There were English violets in Marcia's belt, redolent with sweetness. Erle was lying near enough to catch each wave of fragrance as Marcia turned to see some new bit of changing color. He had brought them to her from the mail that day and she had not said who sent them, but such a flood of light had illumed her eyes that he was jealous of the sender. Even though the sender were a woman, he begrudged that look.

Marcia, turning suddenly, saw the figures of two men coming up through the long

stretch of rolling pasture between them and the house, up through the little marshy spot where the stepping stones led from the birch trees to the path beyond, on over the suggestion of road, narrowed by sweet ferns and huckleberry bushes, with the grass almost filling up the wheel tracks, still on, through the gaps between what was once a rail fence, and as soon as she could distinguish their faces, she started up quickly, excused herself, and hastened to meet them.

Erle could see her give a hand to each and turning, draw them toward him.

"Doctor Erle," Marcia said as they met, "the Reverends Dean and Dearing." Then she turned her face to Dr. Dearing. "Something is wrong. I have felt it all day. What is your message?"

Her face had become white and intense; the laughing light had all gone out and her eyes seemed burning.

"You always know," he said. "Mrs. Dun-

can has been thrown from a carriage and hurt. She is unconscious. Mr. Duncan telegraphed for you and Dr. Erle."

Then turning to Erle he added: "Dr. Goldwaith, the family physician, is too old to trust himself in a delicate operation, and such is needed; he says it is concussion of the brain."

Erle felt keenly alert in an instant. He was somewhat excited by this unexpected summons from strangers. He knew Mrs. Duncan was Marcia's close friend and the husband a connection of hers and Paul's, and through them, no doubt, had learned of him. But he was astonished that he should have been chosen at such a moment. Had he known it, Dr. Goldwaith had heard of him through an old friend in the city and to him he owed the choice.

Serious as the news was for Marcia and sympathetic as Erle was, he could but think how all this delicious idleness must now be

left behind; but he rejoiced in the thought that Marcia would still be near him.

She had been swept past commonplaces and completely overwhelmed by the news, she walked on with Dr. Dearing silently for a while, that intense look upon her face, then she asked:

"Is the little mother with you, Dr. Dearing? I would like so much to see her."

"Yes, she is waiting for you at the house."

"And you, Dr. Dean; do I lose the treat of seeing you?"

"My dear, I fear you must go at once," said Dr. Dearing. "We think you had better take our carriage and we will wait here until its return to-morrow. It is too important that you should reach there, to allow of your waiting for the morning train. Samuel knows the horses he will drive, and we think you should reach there before midnight."

They were by the house now, and Marcia waited to hear no more. A little, calm-faced,

gray-haired woman stood with Paul awaiting them.

Marcia went to her and put her arms around her and kissed her.

"Little mother, you were so good to come."

Mrs. Dearing kissed her lovingly and said, "I thought you would be glad to see me; but oh! I wish I might have come without such sad news." And she drew Marcia away with her toward the house.

There was a hasty supper, a hurried packing, and Erle found Marcia close by his side and Paul seeing to the robes, for the evenings were chilly, and then amid a chorus of friendly voices the carriage was driven off.

No apology is needed for the fact that these two young natures in less than one month had come to love each other. It was in the natural order of things, their mutual love for Paul had revealed them to one another before they had met, though as yet

neither of them had awakened to the actual existence of love.

In all true love the intellectual and spiritual elements rule. Marcia, as Erle now knew, was a woman of no mean intellectual powers, but they were subservient to the spiritual in her.

This it was which put her in sympathy with all honest, simple natures and led them to say of her that she was not only a woman of strong intellect, but also that she possessed a great heart.

Yet now, this woman, with her intellectual perceptions all quickened, sat beside him, blind to a love she would have recognized quickly enough, if it had not touched herself.

Why does the natural inborn coquetry of a woman lead her to repel when she longs to attract? May it not be because so much more hangs on a woman's "yes," which seals her final surrender, than ever attaches to a man's offer of marriage?

With the best of men there is an uncon-

scious reservation of thought and feeling, in every picture they form of themselves after marriage. But a good woman feels that the very fountains of her thoughts may be changed by the nature of the man she chooses.

The old driver on the front seat knew and loved Marcia well, and he prudently determined to turn a deaf ear to anything which might be said throughout this long night's drive, however he might be tempted to catch the drift of their conversation. Was it not already well known to those who had seen them together, that this talented young doctor was very much in love with their Marcia? She might not know it, no one thought she did yet, but every one else knew it; as for her, they were not sure that she would care for him, even by-and-by when she should learn it from him. Of course it was expected that he would care for her. Who could help it?

Old Samuel chuckled to himself, "I wonder if he thinks nobody knows it? I know it. What's an old body like me? He didn't care if I did see him looking after her the last time I was down there, the day she took the wild roses from him over the fence. Oh, but I have eyes if they are old ones."

Samuel's thoughts were suddenly interrupted; they had jolted over a rolling stone and the road grew rapidly worse. Samuel had no more time for speculation, for an hour.

Erle and Marcia had tacitly consented to put away for the time any expression and, as far as they might, any thought of the sad mission on which they were bent and to enjoy this unexpected ordering of things as a sort of fortification for the days of care and anxiety to come. They had put themselves in possession of all that was known of Mrs. Duncan's case and were prepared to meet any emergency.

These few hours lying in between, before any possible help could be rendered, must be spent together and that fact brought to Erle a greater ecstasy than he would have thought possible under such circumstances. As for Marcia, her intense mood had so far relaxed that she was aware of herself once more and knew she was being taken possession of by a potent force which was delightful. As to what it might portend she was all uncertain as yet.

What did that strange thrill mean that seemed to link his presence to hers? Did she love?

It had crept slowly into Erle's consciousness that this exquisite woman had entered every recess of his nature, and that life would not be life without her love.

They talked easily enough about anything or nothing for a while, then they sang softly song after song together, until Samuel, overcome by the charm of the music and the

lateness of the hour, nodded drowsily on the front seat, while the well-trained, intelligent horses, who hardly needed his guiding hand upon the reins, kept steadily onward.

They quoted thoughts here and there from books they loved and then a silence fell upon them. A silence during which the lingering color in the sky dropped suddenly back into the darkness behind it, and the gloaming vanished into the night, and the stars gleamed brightly.

Marcia was seeking some new way of escape from the soul of this man, which she felt was pursuing her. Another woman might have tarried for him, but, as for Marcia, her spirit must be seized and mastered by the sweet force of the man who was to be her lord, before she would rest contentedly beside him.

The fragrance of the laurels swept up to them, as they rode. The leaves swayed gently around them. The stars were glori-

ous above them, yet no word found utterance upon their lips.

Erle began to sing again.

"Now the danger's past," thought Marcia. But what are these words? Yes, she knows:

"Through the leaves the night winds, moving,
Murmur low and sweet."

How exquisitely true is his voice!

All the way through he sings it, never turning to look at her, sitting so still beside him, yet with each new note full of such tender passion that she must feel it is for her.

"All the stars keep watch in heaven,
While I sing to thee, while I sing to thee,
And the night for love was given,
Dearest, come to me."

Now he is looking at her; he is reaching out his hands to her; he is waiting for her eyes to meet his own; he is folding her hands in his as he sings:

"And the heart for thee is yearning,
Bid it, love, be still
Bid it, love, be still."

The song has ceased and he is murmuring

to her words which forever bind their souls together, for the clasp of his loving hands, and the tender pleading of his voice has revealed to her how truly, how deeply, how sincerely she has grown to love him, while wondering just what name to give to her emotion.

The time was passing quickly and they would soon go out of this tender, love-lit companionship, teeming with happy fancies and emotions, and lose for a time their hold on each other in the sorrow of this household into which they were going.

A late moon was coming up from behind the soft clouds as they drew rein beside the old home of the Duncans.

Marcia led the way softly toward the back of the house, and trying the latch found it still unfastened, and so, deftly opening and shutting the massive door of heavy oak plank, which had swung back and forth upon all the daily going in and out, for genera-

tions, she took Erle into a quaint old square room where a fire of smouldering logs burned upon the immense hearth, and flitting noiselessly through one of the many doors, left him alone.

He had seized her for a moment and pressed a hasty kiss upon her lips before, blushing, she had hastened away from him. He gazed into the glowing depths of the fire before him. It was not long before she came back bringing Mr. Duncan and Doctor Goldwaith with her and after introducing Erle, she stole to her own room and putting on a soft gown took her place by Hester's bedside. In passing she had looked in to see if the children were asleep and determined that the morrow should see them safe with their grandmother Duncan.

The case was one which required all of Erle's hard-earned skill. But at last the danger was over. The operation had been successful and after five days of constant

care and watching, Hester Duncan was conscious, but it would be months before she could take up her duties again, and Erle and Doctor Goldwaith were imperative in saying all care must be laid aside.

Marcia was the only one to assume the vacant position in the household, and this she consented to do, but not without keen pangs of disappointment. She had looked forward to the return to the happy life on the mountain, when Erle and she would learn to know and understand what this love meant which had come thus into their lives, and now, it could not be. And they had not seen each other alone in all these days, but for a few moments, and Erle had not spoken again of love, though he had looked it and every touch of his hand had been tender. Marcia had grown somewhat cold, for fear she had yielded too readily, and Erle was silent because he fancied she regretted what had passed, and so things went all wrong, as

they always do when two people love each other in a first, sudden passion.

Now that Hester Duncan was getting slowly better, Marcia would steal out into the old haunts of her girlhood, trying to determine just what had gone wrong. But these self-communings only ended in a burst of tears which brought no enlightenment. She always chose a time when Erle was safe in the library with Mr. Duncan, because he might think she wanted him to go.

"He need not go if he does not want to," she would say to herself, as though he had any choice in the matter, not knowing her mind. Perverse womanhood!

Mr. Duncan would not hear of Erle's leaving, although it was the first of June. And he was glad to linger, hoping for some further chance of a better understanding with Marcia. He had been too morbidly sensitive until now to do as he would once

have advised another to do—request an interview and learn the turth.

But at last his stay reached a limit—he could not go away in this uncertainty. He went up to Hester's room and asked for Marcia. She had gone for a short row, Hester said, surprised that he was not with her. He surely could not miss her if he followed; the landing was so near; so, happy in his hope of clearing up all doubts, he hurried down the hill to the smooth green bank, with its grand old trees gnarled and twisted by the growth and floods of centuries, and there he stood watching anxiously for some sign of the boat or Marcia. By-and-by it came in sight, around a bend. He would go to meet her; he would beg her to be her own sweet self again. But she was not alone. A fine-looking young man in a blue flannel suit was pulling the oars, and as Erle stood watching, said something to Marcia and took a bunch of wild flowers from his hat and gave

them to her. She put them to her lips in a careless happy way and fastened them to her belt. Erle did not know why, but the scent of English violets seemed to rush over him. He felt his face growing pale, and his teeth set tight together and then in a mad, blind way he turned and walked away. But Marcia had seen him.

"Dr. Erle," she called, "are you wanting me? Is Mrs. Duncan worse?"

"No thought for me," thought Erle, "fool that I have been."

Well, he would end it now. To kiss that fellow's flowers. Those violets, too, of long ago. He had sent them of course. He met her as she came up the bank with such a hard, cold look upon his face that Marcia quailed for a moment, then a stricken, fearful look came into her face, appealing mutely to the man who had so lately won her. But Erle was too blind with imaginary wrongs to see it. In a cold, strained voice he said:

"Good-by, Miss Hunt, I leave to-night."

He had suddenly determined to take a night train for the city.

Marcia equally proud and sensitive, paled perceptibly, but said coolly:

"Shall we see you again soon, Doctor?" She too would be ice.

"No, I think not. Pray do not let me detain you from your pleasure," he said and strode up the bank.

"O Mark! he saw me kiss these flowers. I know he did, that is what it means." And Marcia flashed such a look of desperate disappointment on the face before her, that one might have pitied the man.

"Well, why shouldn't you kiss my flowers," said Mark; "I love you, don't you love me?"

"Oh, yes, but not that way." And the utter hopelessness of the man's love was apparent to him as it had never been before. His face blanched, but in a moment he said:

"No, of course not that way, but I did not know, you did not tell me."

"Mark, you do love me," she said, tears filling her eyes. She sat down upon the bank wearily, and Mark stood beside her; his hand being close to her, she took it in hers and laid her cheek upon it. The man's control was great, but she was taxing it too far; she had long taken his love for granted. He was yet a boy to her. Year after year they had been together.

The two Marks they were called, in token of the almost boyish comradeship between them. Every action of his life was weighed in the scales of her friendship.

His mother had been long dead; he lived with his father, William Barrow, on the farm adjoining the Duncans'.

Marcia of late years had demanded much from him. He must give up his old ways, his old thoughts, old associations, if he would keep her friendship. In fact, she had taken

it upon herself to keep uppermost that which was noble in him, repressing by her counsel those tendencies which were for the worse. He had been grateful to her for this. It was more than any one else would have done for him, and he loved her for it.

Not as Erle loved her. Mark felt it a religious duty to restrain any expression of his love, she was so high above him, she would not understand that he was a man with the same passionate yearnings as other men. Never mind, she should not know. He had conquered himself before, he would do so now.

Marcia, unconscious of his struggle, at last looked up. The white purity of his face astonished her.

"What is it, Mark, why do you look so?" She sprang up beside him and placed her hands upon his shoulders, "What is wrong, Mark?" she asked tenderly.

"Everything is wrong," he said. "Good-by."

He stooped quickly, kissed her hand and in a moment was gone.

She turned and climbed the hill to the house; she could not believe that Erle would go without seeing her again, but she waited in vain for a message from him, and as the hours crept by she at last realized that he had gone.

Oh, the dreary, dreary dragging of the days in the week which followed!

Erle wrote to the Duncans, but never a word for her. It seemed as though she could not live through it. She could not eat. She did not sleep and such a sad pained look had come into her eyes that the Duncans wondered what had occasioned Erle's sudden departure.

Hester Duncan knew that all was not well with her, but she knew also that it was not best to intrude with words upon any mood

of Marcia's. It was a belief of hers that true friendship needs no such medicine for expression.

And in all their love they had proved it to each other. Hester, weak as she was, saw and felt for her friend. She knew that some great grief was upon her and she guessed the cause.

Marcia felt she was of but little value to any but these three, Paul, Hester and Mark, and strove to yield a more perfect service of love to them, that, in their appreciation, she might regain her lost self.

But at last she wrote:

"Oh, Erle! what have I done?" That was all. She thought; "Now he must speak," and perhaps she might make him see things in the true light.

She was Mark's friend, and that because he needed her. There was no one else to help him if she took her love away, and she was sure it was only the love God com-

manded for one's friends. Surely Erle would see this. If she took this love away from Mark, what then! She dared not think; she knew the restraining power she exerted over him. She knew too well just what his life would be without her. Certainly not good. He had never made friends among the best people, under the best influences. He had always yielded to a certain mistrust of himself, which had led him away from good women, when they would have befriended him, and out among the men of the neighborhood, who could boast but little height of soul or purpose. There would be nothing but horses, betting and drinking to fill up the restlessness of his goings and his comings. Could she but keep, a little longer, her hold upon him, she might see him fixed in new tastes, new associations, new attachments. All this was very near now, she thought. Mark was letting himself respond more to the friendly notice of some of the good

women who knew him, and he had mingled with the church folks once or twice on public occasions of late.

After long days of waiting came these words from Erle:

"The scent of violets had grown dear to me. It is now hateful. You must know the reason. I can say no more."

Marcia struggled with her pride for a day and then wrote:

"I had given you so much, Erle, that what I gave him seemed nothing. He understood. I am his friend, nothing more. He needs me. Do not take me altogether from him. I may not let even you do that, just yet. Have you no faith in me?"

A little note neither dated or signed. She sent this out on its mission.

And Erle blind with his unreasoning jealousy, saw but one sentence. These words alone meant anything to him:

"I may not let even you do that."

The end had come then. He would go back to Europe; he would give volunteer work in the worst fields. He threw the poor little missive aside, without a second reading. This is what he sent back:

"Keep your friend. I will not try to take you from him."

It was Mark who gave Marcia this missive. In the neighborly fashion of the country, he had brought the day's mail and this happened to be in it.

He had chosen to see but little of Marcia since that day on the bank by the water. A few notes had passed between them. Marcia urging him to be always true to his best. He, promising to try, and, speaking of some business proposition which had come from a distance and which he thought of accepting.

The idea had come to him, and he could no longer put it aside: "If Erle has lost Marcia, may I not win her?"

He felt that her love would give him

strength to become whatever she would desire and he knew his weaknesses. Poor, poor fellow; He hardly knew how high were the limits of possibility which Marcia had set for him, and even those were nowhere near the nature she could link herself to. Looking at her now as he handed her the letter he saw the eager, hungry eyes she turned upon it.

"Read it," he said and turned away, gazing down from the porch steps where he stood, over the Eden-like beauty of the wooded fields and hills stretching for miles before him. At last he turned—she was holding fast with both hands to the old-fashioned door, the upper half of which was open. Her eyes were shut and she was swaying as though she would fall. In an instant he forgot his own hurt. She was the best of life to him even if she was another's.

He sprang across the porch and taking her in his arms guided her to the sofa in the

square old hall. He disliked a fuss. He did not know whether to call any one or not. He thought she had fainted, but no, she opened her eyes and closed them as though reluctant to become conscious again. Tenderly he smoothed her hair back from her forehead. He took her hands and chafed them—by-and-by she smiled.

"It is all right, Mark. I am your friend yet. You know—now go."

He will never know the sacrifice she is making to help him to the best that is in him.

Mark was in one of those bodily and spiritual states wherein strong impressions are sometimes given and received by some strange power of magnetic currents. For days after leaving Marcia he was haunted by the look in her eyes when she took that letter. Then that white face and those closed eyelids and "your friend yet."

He began to see how much she had done for him. Erle had demanded that she should

give him up and she had refused. Could he permit this—was he so weak that he could let her spoil her life and Erle's when she could never complete his?

No, he would indeed prove to her his love.

He would go far away, among new scenes and people and work out a new life for himself, and then she would be free, and in some way Erle would know of it.

Erle had written to the Duncans telling them he expected to sail soon, but Marcia had not yet been told.

Mark, coming unexpectedly one evening, learned all this when he reached the house. He went into the cool west parlor, off the square hall, fronting south, and lay down on the sofa near the window opening to the west.

Soon he heard Marcia coming. He rose and went out to meet her. She stopped just inside the half-open door, where she had stood that day when he had brought her the letter.

"Marcia," he said, standing in front of her with his hat crushed under his arm and holding out a handful of wild daisies, which she took silently, smiling her thanks,—"I have come to say good-by. I am going to-morrow. You have been my salvation. It is no fault of mine if I love you too well for my own peace of mind. I have not let you know it before by words, but I cannot help it now. I too, am a man like that other, jealous fool that he is."

"Hush, Mark, no more. He was right. I have been blindly mistaken perhaps. Good-by. You will make yourself worthy of some good woman and God will send her to you. Don't forget me, and remember that I shall always love and pray for you."

Marcia turned aside into the parlor, in which all was dim in the twilight. She threw herself on a chair by the window and put her face on her arms across the sill.

The ideal had been very clear before her

and had shut out all hope of any personal happiness from her. She had done her duty, yet life was bare and empty. Something like this flashed into Marcia's consciousness, as she sat there. By-and-by she said to herself: "Does He not say, 'Lo, I am with you alway.' I will not despair, I will work."

She could not think Erle was lost to her forever, and, even had she known that, she would not have sent Mark from her.

She faced all the possible consequences of her decision. She knew she loved Erle with a love precluding such a love for Mark. Erle had chosen to throw out the full strength of the best in him to win her, and through his determined, conscious presentation of his spirit to her he had aroused an enduring and life-giving love.

A nobler spirit might have won her; a purer spirit have mated with hers more equally, but none of these had come to her. None had even recognized, with the peculiar

recognition Erle had shown, the possibilities of her soul.

Men—yes, good men, had asked her in marriage, but they had not known what they asked. She was a lovable woman and they sought her, but they had not come as Erle had come, showing her how the contact of souls might lift, inspire and purify, should she permit the ripening of friendship into a deeper emotion.

She believed God had created for each soul an affinity, that somewhere she should find hers, and as soon as she was fitted to join him, God would reveal him to her.

With Erle she felt a need of all her power. She felt that, beside him, she would grow and strengthen, and not last, with her, was the knowledge that he needed her strong perception of the unseen, to purify and ennoble him.

She accepted the fact that Erle alone, of all men, had awakened the most intense emo-

tions of her being. Knowing and feeling all this, her decision was heroic. The courage which led her to stand firm in her support of Mark, in his weakness, because that support was a work accepted before she knew the possible sacrifices involved, was the same courage which has made heroes ever since the world began, by self-sacrificing devotion to the duty of the hour in the face of all possible consequences. She was fulfilling the promise of the past. She had said, "If I live, my life shall show some good done."

She believed all good done in the world was by the passing from one to another of the bread of life. The individual good of one in contact with another.

If Erle was not willing to take his place beside her, without disturbing her relations already established in the spiritual world, then the time was not yet ripe for the union of their lives.

She rose and began to pace back and forth

through the long room. Sad, lonely and unhappy, yet clinging with all the strength of her soul to the ideal, she felt that the foundations of life were swaying beneath her. She threw herself upon her knees and prayed silently but passionately that God would speak to her; that He would help her to understand the right.

Again she was on her feet pacing up and down in the effort to escape from the darkness around her, but the confusion of thought which beset her, threatened to engulf her in its hopelessness. An hour passed as she sought thus to regain that mastery over herself which would enable her to meet Hester as usual, and Marcia shrank even from her kindly inquiries. Never before had the sorrow of life assumed for her the guise of actual anguish as at present. Trials she had borne, to be sure, and tears were not unknown, but she was taking upon herself her first burden of actual misery.

She felt the need of solitude to regain that mental equilibrium which made self-control a possible thing. She must escape notice for a time and regain her wonted composure. She went up to her room and sat down at the table on which her portfolio lay open. She touched her pen and yet did not take it up.

There are times, as we all know, when under intense excitement, we find new powers revealed within us. Thought plays over a subject with a power of penetrating discernment hitherto unknown to us. We feel that, were we put to the test, even a fine creative power would be ours. Were the task demanded we might bear some great bodily fatigue or accomplish some great mental labor. At such moments are revealed for our encouragement the true capabilities of our individual souls. And if we would but accept the revelation as an actual goal and press on patiently we should eventually

attain to all that has been so suddenly foreshadowed, but not until long after the coming of the revelation.

In the average mind, thoughts do not shape themselves easily into words. The more complex and varied the suggestions which arise the more difficult it becomes to find clear expression for any one idea.

Thus it was that Marcia's soul seemed yearning to express something, but could not find relief in ordinary words. The crowd of new thoughts, old memories and throbbing emotions seemed a burden too great for her to bear.

The impulse was strong within her to express the rhythmic throbbings of her aching heart, but she remembered former failures and hesitated; unfinished attempts at the expression of emotion in words less coldly joined than in ordinary prose. To-night she felt that passionate longing for expression driven back upon itself, rising again only to

be forced back while she walked to and fro in her room, with white lips firmly closed over her set teeth. Her hands clasped each other convulsively; now and then her long fingers twined together back of her head, which pressed back against them, as though she were bracing herself for a struggle. Finally she sank down upon the edge of her bed, her hands still clasped, hanging idly between her knees.

"Gone, gone forever," she sobbed. "I know it, I feel it. He has gone to those men across the sea, to live in an atmosphere of disease and death. He will try to forget me. He wishes to forget me. He thinks me like all the rest, save that the sin, the deceit is not so open. He believes that in me too are the evil passions which he thinks rule the world to-day. O God! How can I stand it," she gasped, rising and pacing up and down the long room again.

"Why do I love him! Why did I think

he loved me! Where is the strength which was to prove a safeguard until true nobility should teach me love at its best! I despise myself! I love a man who flees from me because—because—" she stopped in her rapid walk and pictured again the scene as it must have appeared to Erle. For an instant she softened toward him, then recalling his departure without one last word she gasped: "I hate him! I am stifling! I must have air!"

Quickly she let herself out, ran to the shore, sprang into the boat and pulled down the stream with short, impetuous strokes. Only when her blistered hands pained her did she drop the oars and, sinking down among the cushions in the bottom of the boat, she looked up at the moon shining calmly upon her. Then closing her eyes she prayed for that peace which passeth all understanding, for that heavenly calm which is promised to souls aweary and wrung with anguish.

Had God forsaken her? What had her life been that she should merit such suffering? Must this ache remain forever?

The hush of the night, the wan moon shining so peacefully upon her, the lapping of the water against the boat—all seemed to her, at last, like the voice of nature saying to her as it had been said long, long ago, "Peace, be still."

And Marcia realized that a quieter mood was stealing upon her; she was grateful and felt that once more it was her privilege to draw from the holy springs of comfort, which for a time seemed to have been denied her. Gently she lifted the oars and with quiet, regular strokes pulled back to the landing.

Lighting her lamp she seated herself at her table and after toying for a few moments with her pen wrote:

"O Love! To thee, with ceaseless yearning,
My soul goes out, where'er thou art,
Each tender thought to thee is turning,
And fervent prayers fill all my heart.

"To God's good work life may be given,
Both thine and mine, and though the sea
May roll between, the goal of Heaven
Shines ever bright, and shines for thee.

"O'er us hath rolled a wave of feeling,
Too Heavenly dear, too sweet to last;
Our inner lives to each revealing;
The present closes o'er the past.

"But tears are vain and vain repining;
The clouds that lower above to-day,
To-morrow show their silver lining;
Good deeds shall chase all gloom away.

"The cup from which, at fullest measure,
Thy soul, athirst, drank long and deep,
Still holds for thee its priceless treasure,
If ye the Master's precepts keep.

"Peace in my soul then rests forever;
I know and feel that love divine
Shall fill our lives with high endeavor,
And bring still closer thy soul and mine."

Marcia laid down her pen, glanced over the lines she had written, folded the sheet, placed it in an envelope, sealed it, and opening her portfolio dropped it into a pocket and turned the key.

Moving to the window she stood for a moment looking up at the stars, pale and worn, but on her face a spirituelle expression,

which made her radiantly beautiful, and told of the victory which she had gained through that faith in Christ which had seemed so far away but one short hour before.

PART THIRD.

"The longing, the delay and the delight,
Sweeter for the delay; youth, hope, love, death,
And disappointment—which is also death,
All these make up the sum of human life."

LONGFELLOW.

As a rule, women of this age are apt to come to an understanding of their own motives earlier in life than men. The statement that they never know their own minds is a false one. They know only too well what they want, and because of this knowledge they develop into individuals much sooner than men. The calibre of the woman, even though it may be small, is fixed earlier in life than with man.

Erle, though five years older than Marcia, was much younger in development. As has been indicated, the tendencies of the man were, on the whole, toward the good, and he

had rested upon this knowledge in an inactive way.

A superb self-assurance had apparently been the out-growth of this belief of his, that, given tendencies being right, the man would be good enough.

Since knowing Marcia, there had often been very troubled depths in his thoughts, and this self-assurance was not as deeply rooted as it seemed. He had come to acknowledge an unexpected and rather unwelcome element in himself; an unbidden questioner, as it were, had arisen and challenged him to a reconsideration of questions long since dismissed from his mind. He no longer felt himself securely anchored in the stream of life. He found that, would he regain his former ground of careless repose, he must first grapple with and overcome certain questionings which had seized upon him, and would not let him go.

Being without vicious tendencies, he was

all the more apt to fall a victim to certain temptations, because he was not actively on guard against them. If at last he succeeded in ennobling this nature, which is common to all, by the reception of something better, and purer, and stronger, the story of his struggle and attainment may aid and encourage others in what all will admit is inevitably before them.

Young men may intrench themselves behind a bulwark of fallacies regarding each other and suppose they have sufficiently protected and supported their individual rights as men, but the spirit of truth which is enlightening this age is stronger than all the accumulative force of tradition and custom. Because one young man says of another: "Oh! he's all right." "Let him alone." "Men are men." "He is good enough as the world goes," or some such evasive answer, which is intended to stand as a screen between the weak and disappointing struggles

with temptation and the world; it does not follow that, unknown to the world, the spirit of truth is not making evident to the individual combatant the far-reaching and momentous issues of each battle. They may deceive others, but few are themselves deceived. All, sooner or later, learn that there is good and evil in the world, and that, sooner or later, choice must be made, and that the choice is attended with a decided effort in placing themselves in an environment of good, or out of an environment of evil.

The stronger the tendencies and the more sensitive the nature of the man, the less he cares to feel that his battle is perceived by indifferent or critical eyes. Yet, even to such, the suddenly revealed and silent sympathy of some good friend, man or woman, comes like a breath of life from heaven, strengthening and encouraging to renewed effort.

A man, whose reputation for unselfish de-

votion for the good of his sex may not be of the best, will, at times step out of his way, unobserved, as he thinks, to restrain from and draw out of an alluring temptation, some man whose knowledge of life is less extended than his own.

He might not seek to avoid temptation in his own path, because he deemed that the sweep of the current, through habitual yielding, had become too strong for him, but he would so far acknowledge what had once been possible to himself that he would wish success to attend the efforts of another where he had failed. To such a man the possibility of resistance is still open.

Erle's nature was the result of a peculiar combination of elements, which, while contradictory in themselves, were coming to modify and regulate each other in him, until a certain Herculean force showed itself, when his energy was once fairly aroused. Joined to an ardent, sanguine temperament, he had

an inherited, lazy love of that beauty which appeals to the senses; harmony of color and form, and sweet sounds, with all that desire of ease which a love for the beautiful tends to develop in one.

His career would probably have been visionary and unpractical had not his puritanical training served in the double capacity of check and spur.

All that generations of such training could bring him, through heredity, from his mother's side of the house, was necessary to restrain the pleasure-loving impulses derived from his father, in whom these impulses might have become lawless had not his natural integrity and purity of principle been strengthened by an iron will. But after all, what is the use of going back thus into whatever may be the why and wherefore! Let each debt to heredity stand out, distinctly charged to its proper source, and we are yet confronted by the sum total of all, in the

person of the same man with possibly an added touch of individuality at the last, which, by its presence, gives us a new problem in humanity.

In Erle it would have been a difficult task to trace all the motives for his various actions. It is enough to present a truthful picture of the man as he would have appeared to any close observer during this period. Once taken possession of by this passionate jealousy, the very reaction from the usual sluggishness of his nature only made it still more furious. Since, through its influence, the senses were carried to extremes from which it was more difficult to regain their normal tone than might have been the case with a man of less intensity.

Erle was more or less a man of the world. There is a saving clause in the statement, in the fact that he knew enough good men who were not of this sort, to have acquired a firm belief in, and admiration for their kind. But

they had not yet led him to believe in their views of things. The opportunity for making a trip in the company of such a man led Erle to hasten his departure from New York.

He had known Dr. Jacob Flagg as a practising physician, when he was a medical student. Flagg was, like many in his profession, a philanthropist, in that he gave a great deal of work to people from whom he would never take pay. It was, he thought, the tithe he owed. Some men would have ended the sentence by saying, "to humanity," but Dr. Flagg, if he finished it all, would have added simply, "to the Lord."

It was said in the matter of fact way which another man would have used if he had substituted "my employer" or "the company." The man seemed giving an out and out work to the world and not caring greatly how much return he got for it just now.

It was this earnestness and a happy assur ance that the return was sure to come, some

way or another, because the Creator's ways are equal, that had drawn Erle to him, years ago.

His only child, a daughter, had married. His wife was dead and his own health was better at sea than elsewhere; so he had become the surgeon of a ship, on one of the regular lines. Then, too, there was the chance of extra work among the steerage passengers and sailors. He did not always wait for people to tell him they were ill, but when he saw an ailing young mother or a too devoted daughter or an over-tried, sorry-hearted man, he would greet them in a kindly, sympathetic way, and with a tact very rare in men, draw from them their troubled stories and, with some little anecdote, in their own tongue, leave them with smiles upon their faces or tears in their eyes.

It was next this man that Erle took his place at the long table, in the saloon, at the first meal on shipboard. Across the table and a little further down, sat two women,

evidently mother and daughter. The younger one called the other "Mrs. Moss," and Mrs. Moss in turn called the younger one "My dear" or "My child." Other evidence of the relationship was wanting. Though the lady addressed as Mrs. Moss was much older than the other, her color was so fresh, her laugh so gay, her manner so girlish, her face so free from care, that, but for a set of teeth a little too dead white and even, and an inclination to grow stout, she might easily have passed for a woman of thirty and a sister instead of a mother.

But if the mother's face was free from all trace of care, her daughter's was not so. There was an anxious uplifting of the eyebrows, a slight knitting of the brow between the eyes that betokened a constant state of anxious expectancy.

This daughter's name was Clara.

Dr. Flagg was speaking to Erle and had called him by name, when the attention of

the two men was first drawn to them by an exclamation from Mrs. Moss.

"Erle?" She repeated, turning to her daughter. "Can it be possible? Do you suppose that he can be the son of my dear friend Mrs. Erle, of whom you have heard me speak so often?"

There was a still higher lifting of the eyebrows, as Miss Moss caught the remark, intended not alone for her. She was very sure, if there ever had been any Mrs. Erle of her mother's acquaintance, she had never called Mrs. Moss "dear friend." Ladies of culture were not apt to speak of her in that way, and Erle looked as though his mother must have been one.

Still she said nothing. Mrs. Moss was a woman of strong fancies, swayed by impulse rather than reason, and her fancy had been attracted toward Erle rather more than toward any other man at the table. She had once met a Mrs. Erle, to whose politeness she

owed one of the pleasantest half-hours she had ever spent among her own sex. They had met at a country sewing society to which Mrs. Moss had ventured, because she happened to know she would encounter a certain gentleman there whom she wanted to see.

Mrs. Moss had fastened upon Mrs. Erle as the most attractive person in the room, and, Mrs. Erle being a stranger, did her best to entertain one to whom she saw the others were none too kind. After the meal was over, Mrs. Moss worked her way to the door before Erle could reach it and extending her hand to him as he approached, said:

"I am sure your dear mother and I were friends, if I heard your name correctly. Erle, is it not?"

"Yes," assented Erle.

"How much like her you look!"

Now Erle knew his likeness to his mother was not strong, but it pleased him, as Mrs. Moss knew it would, to hear her say so.

He did not feel like denying the claim she made, because he was so lonely that any one who could speak of his mother to him was welcome. She walked beside him, chatting gayly, he responding in monosyllables, until she turned suddenly and drew her daughter into the conversation.

"You see, doctor, how I can feel for you since your mother's death, for I said to myself as soon as I made up my mind who you were, 'suppose he were my Clara;' I mean, you know, suppose she, poor child, were left all alone. Clara, I really think you would die." Clara looked rather indifferent and acknowledged Erle's bow a little too gushingly he thought. She took his hand in both hers and said, "I am so glad to know you, Doctor Erle."

She concluded she might as well accept the dear-friend theory, since it did not seem incongruous to Erle.

"Dear Mamma has so often told me of

your mother that I feel I too knew her. What a charming person she must have been!"

Up to this time Erle had not been unpleasantly impressed by the two, but at this unhappy attempt at conversation, he recoiled. Could his mother have been a "dear friend" to a woman like Mrs. Moss; an unrefined, uncultivated, vain woman? He hardly thought so.

The daughter was not entirely displeasing, but he wished she would discriminate better in her manner of speech.

No one more companionable had yet appeared, and Erle allowed himself to be dragged on, until he found himself arranging seats for them and was actually offering his services in one way or another.

Very soon Mrs. Moss sent Clara on an errand to her stateroom and used the opportunity she had made to say: "My darling Clara is so sensitive and she is seldom at ease

with strangers. I am so glad we have met you. Her trip be will so much more charming."

It was well Clara did not hear this, as she would have found it difficult to look her part.

This was the first time her mother had adopted just these tactics. However, Mrs. Moss was not lacking in discernment, and she saw Erle must be carefully baited before he could be caught for any kind of easy companionship as she intended.

He excused himself after a time, and went in search of Dr. Flagg.

"An old friend of your mother's is she?" said Flagg when Erle joined him.

"I believe so."

"See here, Erle, I never knew your mother, but I don't think she would have chosen a woman like that for a friend."

"Why, Flagg, perhaps she is not so bad—needs toning down, but good enough at heart,

I guess. My mother may have been sorry for her."

"Take my word, boy," said the doctor with a twinkle in his eye, "she needs the sorrow of any good woman."

"Oh! come on, Flagg. Let me go down below with you."

Doctor Flagg was only too glad to let Erle make his round with him among the steerage passengers.

There were some babies quite ill and it was hot and stifling down there. The two men soon forgot the matter, busy with their charitable work. When they once more went on deck they had it to themselves. They smoked their cigars for a while, rather silently, and then: "Let us turn in" came from Dr. Flagg, and Erle, because he hoped he might forget, for a few hours at least, went too.

The next morning, at breakfast, Erle was surprised and not too well pleased to find

that, in some way, Mrs. Moss had effected a change of seats at the table and now settled beside him, saying: "Doctor, Clara is so homesick that I brought her over here where she would feel a little more among friends."

However, it was not Clara who sat beside Erle, but the mother. There was a new face across the table now, and as Erle looked up and saw the quiet repose upon it, the frank, questioning eyes, beneath the widow's cap, he felt for one moment that his own mother was before him. And then too she smiled so sweetly to him when he showed her any slight courtesy, that he felt drawn out toward her at once. However, he could not be rude to these women who had made the first claim on him.

He answered Mrs. Moss' questions as pleasantly as he could, all the while hoping that her coarseness might escape the notice of the lady opposite, or at least that she might not associate him with them as a relative.

He was glad when at last the meal was over.

"Doctor, we shall see you soon!" they exclaimed together as they left the table.

"I am afraid not this morning, ladies, Doctor Flagg has some work for me," said Erle with cool politeness.

"Oh! I hope there is no serious illness on board, is there?" Mrs. Moss exclaimed.

"Some little babies among the steerage passengers are quite ill and the mothers are tired out, poor things."

Erle said this in hopes of hearing some offer of help from the two which would have pleased him, even if it had not been accepted, but the offer was not forthcoming.

"Oh, we thought it might be something serious, something contagious," said Mrs. Moss, as she and Clara passed out. Yet this woman was not void of good, generous impulses; they bent her to themselves at times, as they do all people; but they failed to

govern her life for lasting good. Impulses always do fail one sooner or later, if there is no pure actuating principle back of them.

These two in most things worked for each other's interest, excepting that there were times when Clara, doubtful of her mother's policy, remained non-committal, till she knew how the other's advances would be received. She was always ready to tack and apologize if necessary. One day when her mother had boldly stopped at the door of the captain's room and intimated her desire to enter and examine its various appliances, packed with such skill in so small a space, "yet all so business-like, so cozy," as she termed it, Clara was quick to discover the rebuff awaiting her if she persisted. The captain's brow knit ominously and he stood with scant courtesy, silent, his pen suspended and his attitude threatening, till Clara, seeing there had been a mistake made, said:

"Oh! Captain, mamma is so interested in

all scientific works, you know, you must excuse her."

Then she piloted her mother off with the adroit suggestion that she thought she saw Erle on the other side of the vessel and perhaps he was looking for them.

Erle had discovered how very slight must have been the ground on which Mrs. Moss based that "very dear friendship." That device had long since ceased to attract him, yet there was a careless, inviting freedom in their company which was not without its charm to a young man, and Erle felt at liberty to make their companionship a convenience without a troubled conscience.

The mother was old enough to take care of herself and the daughter too, if she chose.

There was no danger of his marrying either of them. Oh! dear, no. Every one knows how pleasant it is to receive the attention of a gentleman one likes, but most people would rather go without it than to make the strife

after it apparent. This is only a little matter of training and disposition perhaps, but it cannot be overcome. Mrs. Moss and her daughter were not burdened by any inherited or acquired prejudices of this kind. They wanted to be amused and waited on and were willing to sacrifice such slight considerations as delicacy or truth, or other people's convenience, without for a moment thinking of them. As for Mrs. Moss, even Clara did not fully understand the mood upon her.

Erle's strong, young, magnetic beauty had drawn a more genuine admiration from this woman of fleeting attachments than was usual with her; and this woman, day after day, consumed by her selfish vanity, strove to draw Erle into associations from which all that was best in him shrank with distaste.

The poor young mothers down below had learned to welcome Erle's coming, for often he would take the poor, little, suffering, moaning babies up in his strong arms and

carry them up and down the narrow passages, or rock them back and forth till they slept in his arms, but in spite of the attention, on the fifth day out, one of the babies died.

It was the mother's only child and she was alone. Erle stood looking at the broken hearted, sobbing mother as the little body sank forever out of sight, in the sea. He was thinking how beyond control were so many of life's affairs, and feeling how gladly he would have changed places with that little dead baby if he could. He cared so little what came next, and the restoration of that child would bring so much happiness to the mother's heart.

It was starlight when he went up on deck, and as he stood smoking at the rail, a touch was laid upon his arm. Very close beside him stood Mrs. Moss, who said, laughing and pouting:

"Really, Erle, I fancied those women with their dead babies had quite won you from me."

O ye good women! forgive her if you can. O ye mothers! like the one whom God had given to Erle, find pity for her in your hearts, if you can. You whose true, tender faces, as they pass through a crowded room or along the busy street, make the whole world cleaner and better for the passing glimpse, have mercy upon her in her unfaithfulness to the daughter she had borne.

But she failed signally in her part just here. She could not guess the battle raging in the heart of the man beside her. In the stern silence which followed, she saw that she had erred.

She turned her face away and loosening a handkerchief from the folds of her dress, she feigned the tears, which she hoped would move the man's nature.

It was a little thing to turn the current of this strong man's life, but as she held the filmy stuff against her face the breeze caught from its folds the delicate scent of English

violets; brought it to Erle's senses and for the moment stunned him, as though a hand had been laid upon his heart.

The memory of a strong, pure, beautiful face, full of love, rose up before him. The breeze of the hills blew over his brow and whatever influence the woman at his side may have gained, it was gone forever. She had been playing a skilful game, but she had lost.

At that moment, Erle realized how the meshes of the net she had spread for him had been one by one closing around him, and gasped at the possible consequences had not his awakening come at the right time.

He uttered no reproaches; he spoke no word of the evil she had almost brought upon him. He was an American and Americans are slow to utter the thoughts which shape their actions; slow to reveal the motive power behind their actions; still slower in permitting the purity of their souls to look up

against the evil which would drag them down.

With scant courtesy, Erle almost staggered away from the side of the woman who was tempting him to forget all that was possible for good in his life. He reeled and almost fell. He steadied himself and went on over the long, silent deck, to the companion way. As he drew near to the door of the cabin, Doctor Flagg met him.

"What's the matter, Erle?" Then he saw a woman's figure pass outside. "That devil," he muttered to himself.

He took Erle's arm and led him into his own stateroom.

"Now boy, it's all right," and he drew his hand gently across Erle's forehead, standing beside the berth on which he was lying.

"All right? I wish to Heaven it were," and Erle, at the touch, gentle as a woman's, and the tender tone, turned upon his face and unrestrained by the presence of others, shook

with convulsive sobs. Who shall say, but that in this hour of contrition, the angel face of his mother bent over him in tender compassion! Who shall say that Marcia's spirit did not stand beside him, to encourage and strengthen him. The spirit from the future, and the spirit from the present met, perhaps, beside the soul they loved and the powers of evil fled before them.

You, who would challenge the truth as it stands, have yet to learn that it is not the full truth of a battle fought and won, of a spirit tempted but victorious, which can harm the world, but the petty cavilling, which would keep such struggles unrevealed. The poor half-truth which pretends to hide while it reveals the weakness of our natures, but denies the glory of the victory which seeks to voice itself.

You, who would say the truth has not been told as it is, have yet to learn that there are yet unrevealed depths in God's truth,

which only your own poverty of spirit shuts you off from entering into and beholding.

And you, blessed mothers, God aid you in giving to the world those treasures, precious above the price of rubies, good, true, tender, loving men and women.

It was well on in the night, when Erle, with the look upon his face that long sickness sometimes gives, and a contest of the spiritual and earthly always brings, rose up and bade Doctor Flagg good-night.

Before Erle went out he said: "To think that I should have set myself up as Marcia's judge."

"My boy," said Flagg, looking at Erle searchingly and kindly, "if you have learned your lesson, go back to her as soon as you can. The love of a truly good woman is not easily won, but once gained it is not easily lost. Before taking steps of vital importance, it is well to be sure you have certainly lost that love."

It was not principle which led Erle to resist the fascinations of this woman. The resistance came at last involuntarily. His mood had changed. He was in that blind whirl, beyond the limits of reason, where his only rescue lay in an appeal to the senses. The appeal came and it did for him what cool reasoning would have failed to do. It led to a victory; but if temptation again should beset him it would be reason which would resist it, because of the assurance gained of what was possible for him, and after a time reason would grow into a fixed principle which would shield him so that at any time he might withdraw from it, through the ever-open way of escape, into an environment of truth and divine love.

The next day was the Sabbath and Doctor Flagg, who often read the service, was relieved by the young clergyman who had read the burial services for the dead baby.

He was on his way with his wife to visit

her family in Germany, and as there were but few passengers, they had come to know and be known by nearly all on board. Mr. and Mrs Perry were a noticeable couple; he, for a physique strikingly proportioned, large, powerful and well developed, a noble head and a face with as sweet and pure a soul looking out of his fine eyes as a man ever bore; she for a captivating loveliness of manner and far-reaching sympathy which penetrated to every heart. She had been so full of devices for the general comfort and amusement of the passengers, so full of bright laughter, and general good cheer, that the Captain had said he would run ten trips to carry one such passenger.

Erle was curious to know what this young divine, who looked the man, might have to say to these different souls. A few platitudes probably, a few trite thoughts of no new import to him.

It was too much to expect that this man

should have anything to say which might affect him, yet he was craving anew that purifying spiritual atmosphere he had left behind him with Marcia, and his voice attracted him.

Erle drew up to the outside of the group where he could watch the play of his features and catch each word. The singing had already stirred him. At sea, thus, in the open air, with the men's voices (even his own) joining so heartily, he felt the spirit of the hour moving him to an almost involuntary and instinctive act of worship. Mr. Perry lifted his hands in an attitude of prayer. Erle bowed his head.

"Father, Thou who holdest this ship in thy hand and dost permit her to ride in safety upon the bosom of the vast ocean, Thou in whose hands are the issues of life and death; bless us now.

"Thou who didst create us in thine own image—Thy sons—Sons of God; Thou who

hast taken of Thy divine nature and made it ours; who hast enshrined in the temple of our bodies Thy soul, lean now down to us, in tender pity and love.

"In pity that in ignorance we oft defile and profane these bodies which should be Thy dwelling place. And in that everlasting, tender love Thou hast made possible to us, draw us unto Thyself, that we may partake of the privileges of Thy sons once more, and so receive anew by acts of faith and love Thy gift of inheritance.

"Bless us, cheer us and forgive us this hour for Jesus' sake. Amen."

Was it the speaker's magnetism or a homelier way of putting things than is usual, that drew Erle into complete sympathy with the mood of the man? He began to see clearly what had, until now, been a confused mass of mental and spiritual suggestions.

The living truth began to formulate itself

in his mind and his soul to become a known quantity.

He listened eagerly, yes anxiously for that which was to come. Then this young clergyman, simply, earnestly, and without a trace of the mannerism so apt to mar the truth, began to speak.

"Friends, has it ever occurred to you why we men enter the ministry? Why we, who are your brothers, dare to stand before you to instruct?"

Yes, that had often occurred to Erle. He fell into a reverie and for a while heard, but did not listen to the words of the preacher. When at last he aroused, Mr. Perry was saying in those clear tones:

"If we are pure in heart, what does it mean? How shall we know if we are pure in heart? It is known by its singleness of purpose, by the desire for truth and uprightness above all else. A desire so strong that

all would be sacrificed which might come between our souls and God.

"Any soul which has reached this point of self-renunciation must attain to a knowledge of the truth; must see God, who is truth, and through Him become pure in heart, for so God has promised."

Then Erle lost the thread of the talk again as he looked down into the depths of his own heart.

A year before he would have turned indifferently from any statement which could have affected the basis on which any action of his rested. Now his whole heart was enlisted in this spiritual quest. It had always been the negative side of spiritual things which had been presented to him, now the positive appealed to him.

"The soul, fed with the Bread of Life, can rend the veil, and at last man stands, forgetful of the flesh, confronting God.

"Let us purify and make heavenly, the

aspirations of our souls by worthier sacrifices, by the sacrifice Christ made, the sacrifice of the will of the body to the will of God. When the will of the body would draw us into the commission of some sin against the life of the soul, let us sacrifice the will of the material to the will of the immaterial in us. This is what has been made possible to us by the death of Christ."

Thus he spoke and as the words fell from his lips, the veil which had so long hung over Erle's soul, began to drop away, his instinctive perceptions of the good began to return, and he felt that in time he might come to know the divine as Marcia knew it.

This knowledge no longer represented the undesirable in life, for, through it, all things became ennobled and life was transformed into a glorious day. Then came this, in closing:

"Every one of us may enter into the holy communion with God which he has vouch-

safed, by doing this day His will. Holding to the truth because it is truth, according to each one's own individual perception of it. And believing that as surely as you would receive an invisible current of electricity, when in the proper relations, just so surely will you receive this promised current of divine life—vitality of body as well as soul—if you will but touch, by your acts, that everlasting fountain of all life, Christ the truth.

"The world has learned how to handle and control the many invisible material agencies abroad in it, so by constant endeavor it must learn how to utilize the immaterial. He, who has made all else, stands ready to renew both body and soul, and make us again sons of God. Amen."

One after another they quietly turned and walked away. Silence fell upon the long deck; not a sound was heard, save the wash of the waves against the ship's sides.

To Erle, in those few moments, had come a

revelation. He sought his stateroom and fell upon his knees. He asked for that divine light which should make clear his path. He prayed for that purity of heart which should make him a worthy laborer in the field of the Lord. It was not that Mr. Perry had been so impressive, for there were others who had heard him and who had not heeded, but in Erle's case the soil was ready for the seed and it had brought forth an hundred fold.

God often draws his ministers on to speak even wiser than they know. And so it had been this day. When Erle went again to the steerage with the doctor, the poor young mother who had lost her baby looked at him in vague wonder.

Was the man with those determined, shining eyes, the same who had turned from the sea, when the water closed over her baby, with a look of tired indifference, disheartening to her, to whom he had tried for days to

give a hope? She thought it could not be. "The hidden man of the heart" had already sprung into life and was visible in Erle's face. Marcia's dream of bettering the world was being realized.

When a man like Erle passes through an experience in life which disturbs all his preconceived ideas of himself; when all the fresh tenderness of his heart has been revealed to him as Erle's had been, if it has been because of some fault of his own, he finds an impulse of penitence seizing upon him, which shows how the child still lives in the man. Erle wanted to go back and throw himself down on his knees by Marcia and beg her to forgive him. He felt this when he left Doctor Flagg that night; but when morning came the man's way of looking at things had partially returned to him. He said to himself, "I will wait awhile and see what this new impulse means. I will recover myself before I go back to her."

So he ran up to Scotland and then went here and there, yearning to return to Marcia, yet striving vainly to revive the old anger against her, though he did not admit this even to himself.

All the time he found himself thinking how sweet and happy had been those weeks on the hills, among the rocks, and the sweet ferns, across the sea, where the spring sunlight had seemed to draw all the best of him to the surface, where new life and expression had burst forth just as the buds and blossoms do, rejoicing at the return of the life-giving atmosphere.

At last he could bear the restraint no longer. He said "good-by" to every one and returned to New York.

Doctor Goldwaith had written that he would be glad to see Erle filling his place. He wanted to retire gradually, and a partnership for a year would give Erle an opportunity to see how the life suited him and yet

not involve the labor of the entire practice all at once.

This idea was welcomed by Erle. It seemed a legitimate excuse for returning. He would go up to St. George, the railroad station nearest the Duncan's and Doctor Goldwaith's, and discuss the subject with the doctor before he asked any questions or sought to see Marcia.

He would ask a little time to think over the matter and then he would go over to the Duncan's and see her.

The old doctor was just coming out to his buggy as Erle walked up to the door. Putting both hands on Erle's shoulders the doctor greeted him heartily, then turned back and led Erle out of the hot sun into the cool rooms within. "Thought you were on the other side. When did you get back?" said he looking kindly at Erle.

"Yesterday, Doctor, and I came up to see if that partnership is still open."

"Yes, indeed! When an old man takes a fancy into his head, it is not easy to get rid of it again, and I have wished every day you had stayed with me."

"Well, Doctor, I think if you want me I shall try the experiment!"

"All right, my boy; of course you'll spend the night with me and we'll talk it over. I was going down to see a bad case, as you came up, and it's near the Duncan's; I suppose you will be going there to call? We will have tea first, then you can go along."

The house at which they called, half an hour later, was John Barrow's, but Erle did not know it.

His time for recreation, while at the Duncan's had been so limited and his walks had been so often alone, it very naturally happened that he knew nothing of the father of the man who had roused his jealousy. He did not learn this until they were in the house and Dr. Goldwaith said: "This way,

please, one moment. If you will excuse me, I will see how Mr. Barrow is and call you." He showed Erle into a little low-ceiled room on the left of the small hallway and went across the two steps that measured the entry, as it was called, and softly opening a door opposite, went in and shut it after him.

The room Erle was in was a parlor, but showed signs of being principally cared for by men. Odds and ends, slippers and piles of old newspapers lay on a chair near the head of the long, black, haircloth sofa by the window, where it was evident some one was in the habit of lying to read. The shutters were all closed excepting at one of two front windows which opened upon the long, high porch, with a flight of wide steps leading down to the stone flags below. These were more or less covered by the droppings of buds, leaves, blossoms, and seeds from a gigantic balm-of-Gilead tree, which rose directly at the foot of the porch and towered

up, overshadowing the little low house, making a picturesque place out of the small, plain, unassuming little farm house. It was set high on the side hill and the stone wall which terminated at the foot of it made a tempting corner in which to sit during the early evening. Presently Doctor Goldwaith came back and beckoning Erle to follow him, led him into the other room, where Mr. Barrow lay tossing in pain and delirium.

He was a man of sixty, large and gray, and showing the ravages of disease. Over him bent Mark, trying to still his restless moanings. Mark turned and bowed as Erle came forward, but said nothing.

Erle examined the invalid critically and then turned to Dr. Goldwaith.

"Doctor," he said, "one of us, you or I, must stay. I will do so if you like, he needs close watching."

"Very well, I have something I must attend to first. You stay now and I will come later."

Then he went away, leaving these two together, whose hearts were so embittered against each other, to keep their silent watch.

"Marcia! Marcia!" called Mr. Barrow. Mark endeavored to quiet him. He would have preferred that Dr. Goldwaith should bring any man but Erle just now to hear his father's raving.

"Marcia, why did you go without coming to see me?"

"Father," said Mark, hoping to quiet him, "Father, you know she had to go. Dr. Goldwaith sent her, she will come again before long."

There was silence for a while, then the same sad call. Erle could only think that he had come too late; that Marcia already belonged to these men, and he thought, "How can I bear it to lose her now!" The full force of her influence over him became apparent to him.

He ran back over his intercourse with her

from the first night he saw her. He began to feel again the charm of her bright presence, to feel her leading him up into her own world of love and peace. Again he felt her purity, her strength of purpose as she had revealed it to him in those afternoons on the rocks, especially that afternoon which had burned itself into his very being and he began to know his own unworthiness of her. He saw that he might never hope to deserve her love, but all the more passionately he desired it. He wanted to tell her of this new worship for her which had come to him; but he had put himself beyond the power of so doing. He had deliberately, cruelly, he now thought, repulsed her love, at a critical moment. He had flung her into the very arms of this man he knew nothing of; this man who might even now perhaps call her his own; who might be hating his presence because it prevented him from sending for her at once.

Thus he tortured himself. He remembered how she had asked him if he had never known a love so strong it would give all it held dearest, if by so doing it could benefit the one he loved. He could hear his own answer now. How he had said to her, "I think I might feel a love like that some day." Was his love really as strong as that now? Could he give her up and be content with making himself worthy of her friendship only?

He asked himself these questions, not waiting for the answers. And Mark, what could he do or say to tell Erle the truth? He was ignorant of how matters stood between them and was afraid to say too much. Had the two men but known it, Dr. Goldwaith had taken matters into his own hands, and Marcia, with Mrs. Lang, Mark's aunt, was on her way to St. George, bringing with her both joy and sorrow.

In the face of all the world's philosophies

these two elements go hand in hand, sometimes strengthening, sometimes weakening the moral courage and making or marring the inner lives of most of God's human creatures. That joy and sorrow which, with mystic power, plays upon the hidden springs of daily action in the lives of the masses, lives untouched in any direct way by the world of letters and urged only to a little stronger play of the emotions for good or evil by the reflex action of the same.

This is a wonderful age to live in. One hundred years ago, who would have thought that on every seventh day, so large a proportion of the souls upon this globe would be occupied with the same thoughts, upon the same subject. And what is portended by this silent flashing of the light of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of an expectant, receptive humanity ?

What does this coming of the gospel of regeneration, of love, of peace, to hungry, dis-

satisfied, restless souls all over the world, mean?

Simply that, ere long, those that hunger shall be satisfied; they will no longer spend their labor for that which satisfieth not and their money for that which is not meat.

Old people who thought years ago that their lives were past all change, suddenly seem to grow young again. They develop new ideas.

One must speak thoughtfully of the American type. There is an individuality of character among Americans which is apt to lead one astray.

I do not think that Marcia is of any peculiar type. She is only one among ten thousand, but she represents a phase of development which is not the less to be desired because it is becoming less rare. There was an effort in her life to balance the component parts of her nature. In other words, she strove to harmonize mind, spirit, and body,

and get as even a life as was possible from the constantly recurring warfare between the intellectual, the spiritual and the material. Her nature was intense and earnest, but too well trained to reach extremes. The mental and spiritual perception of the highest good, as indicated by her in the lines written on that night of passionate farewell, brought her temporary rest but not permanent peace of mind. There is the systole and diastole of life as well as of the heart. Expansion and contraction, action and reaction, giving and receiving.

Marcia emerged from the darkness of that night fresh and strong, and beautiful. It was because of the perception of what might await her, after faithful, patient years of endeavor; but after this expansion of her faculties to their widest, fullest point of tension, then the systole recurred; the contracting, the narrowing again of all that fulness of life. Then, following this, the more

even running of the currents of thought and feeling.

Mark and Erle were aroused at last from their silent vigil by the opening of the outer door. As they turned, Marcia entered the outer room.

Erle drew back into the shadow, a flood of opposing inclinations playing with his self-possession, as the wind plays with a leaf in a storm. Mark, with a sigh of relief, went out to greet her, as she advanced slowly toward the open fire on the hearth, which had been the one bright and shining feature of the little sitting room and the sight of which had made Erle happier, lending a tinge of hopefulness even to the past hours of unhappy musing.

"Who sent for you, Marcia?" Erle heard Mark say.

"Doctor Goldwaith. Mr. Duncan is here with me. He has gone to speak to O'Neal and his wife."

Mark knew Marcia was out of Erle's sight, as she now sat in a low chair by the fire, and looking down at her, he said in a low tone:

"Do you know that Doctor Erle is here?" pointing to the little inner room.

Oh! that sudden glad opening of the eyes, that happy quickening of the breath.

"Here?"

Mark saw the hope spring up anew, which, generous as he was, was pain to him, but he left her there and went in to Erle.

He only motioned silently toward the outer room, and as Erle rose, took his place. Erle did not go out at once. He stood, thinking deeply, trying to master himself, before meeting those eyes. It was hard that he must go out to her in this uncertainty, not knowing his relation toward her; not daring to speak until he did, and not able to speak as he would were they entirely alone. Had he not hesitated for this short moment his misery must have ended with one look

into Marcia's eyes, but before he reached her, Marcia, impatient at his delay, too proud to linger and hearing the low cry of the sick man, entered the room.

She bowed to him as Mark had done, extending her hand in silence and then bent over the bed.

"Mr. Barrow, I am here. Do you know me? I have come to help nurse you."

Mr. Barrow smiled faintly and at the cool touch of Marcia's hand upon his forehead seemed to grow quieter at once.

Erle was now free to take a few moments of rest. Mr. Duncan was coming in. He would go out and explain his presence to him. He sat down in front of the fire in the outer room, and waited. Had he been free to escape, which he was not, until Dr. Goldwaith returned, Erle would very likely have done so. And yet perhaps not, for Marcia's presence in the house had a fascination for him in spite of the coolness with which she had

greeted him. Marcia, in the reaction of her first strong emotion, had already determined to await events. The sad desolation of the present had been upon her when she entered. Erle was always near her in thought, but this only served to make the separation harder.

However calm might be her face and manner they were so only from pride. Within, all was wild confusion. She had no philosophic thought to steady her; she was simply a very human, loving woman, glad, and hurt, and sorry all together, and crushing all expression of her emotions down with iron pride.

She stood blindly trying to see the features of the man before her. All was black. She would not swerve or falter, she would wait there for her self-control to return again, and she forced her body into mechanical action, taking Mr. Barrow's hand and stroking it with hers, all the while conscious only of gaining time to understand it all.

Mr. Duncan had come and was talking to Erle, insisting upon his going home with him. Then she heard Dr. Goldwaith's voice and then another's and still she seemed asleep.

Then Dr. Goldwaith came in and beckoned her to come to him, but Mark had to tell her she was wanted before she moved. She went to the old doctor, who had been her friend so long.

"He is quiet now. I see Mrs. Lang is here. I will go now and come again to-morrow," she whispered.

Not a word more, but Dr. Goldwaith let her go.

"Shall we go now?" she said to Mr. Duncan. He touched Erle on the shoulder and said: "Come." Erle arose and went in to Dr. Goldwaith, while Marcia put on her hat.

"If you do not need me any more to-night I will go home with Mr. Duncan," he said.

The Doctor nodded in reply, and when

Erle returned to the outer room Marcia had gone. He stepped to the door and at some distance he could see a slight figure before them. Erle turned to Mr. Duncan, a pained, inquiring look in his face, but Mr. Duncan had no explanation to offer. Marcia had felt that she could not face him again now. The sting of that delay had taxed her self-control too far. Once she stopped, realizing how strange her action must seem to Mr. Duncan.

Oh! could she have known the cause of that delay! Then she fled on hastily again, not stopping to look back until she reached the house.

She opened that same low door where she and Erle had entered after that night's drive, and closed it softly behind her. One moment she hesitated as she recalled his words of tenderness, then she hurried on and turned aside into the music room where she had left Hester playing, an hour ago. She was reading by a soft, shaded light near the

fire, when Marcia entered. The softened light, with a faint glow, shone through the rose-tinted shade and brought into relief the little old-fashioned piano, across the corner of the room, which had given place practically to the newer upright, now open, and on which Hester's music yet stood.

The usual supply of wild flowers which these people, both men and women, were always bringing in from their walks, were piled upon the unused instrument.

Pausing only to tell Hester that Erle was with Mr. Duncan, Marcia passed out into the square hall and ran up the low, broad stairs, stopping for a moment at the first landing where another mass of wild flowers filled a niche in the wall. She bent eagerly forward to listen for a sound of that voice which had so overcome her a short time before. There was no sound but the slow dull ticking of the high clock in the hall below. Just so had its giant pendulum beat out the seconds as

drama after drama had been enacted within that old house in years gone by.

The old moon, looking through the dial had smiled long years ago upon another girlish figure, bending to listen from that very spot where Marcia was standing now.

A tall, graceful, beautiful young creature, with silky brown locks curling exquisitely, as they strayed from the tortoise-shell comb and fell upon her forehead and neck. Her slender foot had pressed the very step that Marcia's rested on now, but her face, sparkling with mischievous laughter, had bent to catch the tones of a stranger's voice.

The afternoon sunlight played over her three sisters spinning and chatting merrily in the hall below. Outside the door, with its lower half still shut, stood the stranger, a straight, well formed and handsome man, with dark curls as silky as her own, as bright a color in his cheeks, as merry a twinkle in his eye.

He was just out of her sight and was making his errand known to the three maids before him. They had been warned against listening to that manly voice.

The young officer's luxurious habits had been pictured to them, only to excite new interest. And now he had come, on some mission, from his own acres, not far away, and was begging attention.

She wondered if he wore his gold laced uniform, and if those stupid sisters would forget to ask him in?

Then she felt a spirit of mischief taking possession of her and pushing her onward. Lightly she tripped down the broad stairs and, full of charming witchery, slipped the bands upon each wheel as she fled past them, and turning with a mocking little courtesy, as she reached the further door, flashed such a glance upon the handsome young Captain that he loved her even before he fully realized that she had come and gone. But even that

love, true, and sweet, and lasting, had not flowed smoothly. Mischief had sobered into earnest impulse; had been tested by principle, and the loving maiden with the devotion of friendship, had kept her faith and almost lost her lover just as Marcia had done.

But he had returned at last and had grown up to her standard and she had said to him "Yes" and they had lived and worked happily together.

Now Marcia heard the voice she waited for and hastening to her room flung herself upon her bed, with convulsive sobs.

Oh! the strange heart of woman, fainting for the comfort of one kind word, yet withholding that smile which would insure it.

Hester, quickened by the glad surprise of seeing Erle again, rose as the men entered, and full of a gracious welcome, stood smiling upon him as he approached. There was that exquisite grace in her manner which in its attractiveness far exceeds mere beauty, and

which American women sometimes attain, but rarely.

Erle, who had only seen her pale and worn upon her sick-bed, was surprised to see the happy smiling woman before him, who was saying:

"Doctor Erle, I am so glad, so happy to welcome you. Look at me! See what you have done for me and measure your welcome by the evidence I give of good health."

Erle smiled and bowed over her hand saying: "I did not know so hearty a welcome was ever possible for mortals."

"Surely you do not think there is no such thing as gratitude in the world, Doctor?"

"Very little, that is as genuine as yours, I fear," he answered, still admiring the fresh, cheerful face before him.

"Harry, tell him again we are glad to see him," said Hester as they were parting for the night.

And there was no mistaking the tone in which Harry Duncan answered.

"I guess I've made him understand; if not, I'll begin again to-morrow."

Once in his old room, Erle felt like a different man from the one he had been a few hours before.

It was impossible not to see that he was at home in this house and welcome to these two, at least. As for his questioning of Marcia, it had vanished like an unpleasant dream. He had felt a strange elation taking possession of him on entering the house. Perhaps it was an intuitive feeling that things would adjust themselves in this atmosphere.

Marcia, once alone, found that the whirlwind of emotions in which she had been caught had thrown her down from the calm heights on which she had expected to stand in her intercourse with Erle. And strive as she would she could not attain to them again, at once.

She entered the breakfast room next morning with a forced composure which chilled Erle's new confidence and led him to wonder whether he had done wisely in coming back.

Mr. Barrow was out of danger; Mark had gone back to his business and Marcia and Erle, swayed, as yet, by impulse and that unreasoning instinct which so often leads us aright, though blindly, had tacitly agreed to continue in the existing attitude, each feeling a return of hope once more, since they were beneath the same roof. Any hour might bring the adjustment both so longed for.

Before Mark went away, Marcia and he had met for a few moments in the little parlor across the hallway. By a few touches, Marcia had transformed the bare little room into a bright, cheery spot, and flowers rose high, from a quaint old jar of dark stoneware, against the bare white wall, and books

and papers lay on the table, which was drawn out into the room, and the sofa had been placed opposite the open fireplace, away from the windows, where easy chairs now stood. Thus in a few moments the refinement of the woman's nature had come in and shown how bare had been the life of the household without it.

Mark had stood there in the twilight just before going and had said to her:

"You shall not have all your trouble with me for nothing, Marcia. I am going to give you something, in return for all you have suffered through your friendship for me. I am going to let right living and better thoughts prove my gratitude."

"O Mark! I am so happy now. This—this is worth it all."

The simplicity of Marcia's nature was such that she made no attempt at concealing the sacrifice she had made, when she saw it recognized thus by Mark. Though to have first

revealed it to him would have been an impossibility for her.

As she stood, her hands clasped before her, all the old tempting brilliancy of the girl returned and for a moment seemed to mock his purpose, so great was the temptation to pass the bounds she had set to his love, and which he had accepted and intended to abide by. But the next moment the sense of the purity of her love for him checked him, and never before had the beautiful strength of this woman's character so asserted itself as now, when bestowing on one lover all the intense passion of her nature, she yet appeased, and almost satisfied, with the divine enthusiasm of her friendship, the other.

Marcia's happiness in this victory over the powers which had so desperately beset the soul of one she loved, was sufficient to suggest to her that Erle would return to the old relation; he must recognize and seek her better self. He must not expect her to lower

her standard of the ideal, even for his love. And Erle was seeking with his whole heart to touch the ground on which she stood. He might not walk beside her as her husband but beside her he must be if only as her friend.

So time went on. More than a week had passed and yet Erle had not dared to offer himself anew to Marcia.

The house and the neighborhood was full of guests. Paul Hodaviah Crandle, the young artist; Edmund Oldstory; Rev. Dr. Dean and his wife and Dr. Keen, a professor in a college, where he held an enviable place in the hearts of all; a young poet and a charming girl who had been christened by one of the children "The Beautiful Lady."

There had been much delightful intercourse between the friends, and Erle found himself suddenly lifted by his late struggle into complete sympathy with a new world of ideas.

Heart and brain had passed beyond all the old landmarks, and he saw in himself a new, a better man.

As Erle entered the breakfast room, one morning, he found an animated discussion waging over the coffee. It was the day the Duncans were to give a lawn party, with music and dancing in the evening. As the door opened, Marcia exclaimed:

"Oh! Dr. Erle, you are just in time, I need some one to support my cause. Come—you know you are an idealist."

"Oh, no!" he replied; "you mistake, I am not an idealist. I am intensely practical."

"Yes," said Marcia, "I anticipated your denying it, and I know why you do so. 'Tis because you are like the school boy who always proves his sum backward. The ideal is the highest truth and must have a real practical outcome or it is not a truth at all."

"Do you know, Miss Marcia," said Edmund Oldstory, laughing, "that you fail to agree with the great majority which makes the real and ideal totally apart; one fancy, the other fact. Do you know that the great majority would credit you with insanity. I can put my finger on a passage from the pen of a college president to corroborate me. It happens to be handy and he is considered good authority."

"Oh, no! Don't trouble yourself. I am not affected by the opinion of a college president any more than by that of a professor or a tutor."

"Do you mean to suggest a new philosophy, Miss Marcia," said Hodaviah Crandle, turning his strong, sweet face to hers.

"Philosophy!" she repeated. "That word must include a science of the harmony of truth, before it will apply to my philosophy."

"Ah," he said, "nowhere else in the world is there the slightest hope for it. America

being barren of any philosophy of her own, has at last the opportunity for it."

"Take care how you talk of America and philosophy," interrupted Hester. "Dr. Keen is present, and don't you know that he is an authority on the subject? He has set all Europe agog and actually made the Germans enthusiastic over his work on philosophy. Think of that glory for America."

"Yes, I know it," said Marcia; "but what greater proof of our love can he ask than to find that we are forever losing the great scholar in the good man?" And she looked up at him so ingenuously that his face lit up with an indulgent smile, and the dark eyes beamed beneath the heavy brows. One could tell that the corners of the mouth relaxed their gravity beneath the iron gray mustache as he stroked his beard sagely like the philosopher that he was. No word was spoken for a moment.

"'I am the truth, the way and the life,'"

said Dr. Dean at last. But he looked up at Marcia's glowing face with a growing uneasiness in his heart.

What did it mean that young women should be so nearly abreast with men like himself in seeing and uttering the truth? Were men to lose the leadership by-and-by?

Edmund Oldstory, watching the good man keenly, saw the thought flash across his mind and he uttered it.

"I know what you are thinking, Doctor, and I don't know how we are to help ourselves," he added a little maliciously.

"You wonder if they will take all our honors away from us. They are running us so very closely."

Hodaviah turned to Marcia again. "If you have thought thus far, you have gone further. What will it be?"

"Ask me no more," she said. "The only one who has a right to speak keeps silence."

"Perhaps I can interpret his thought,"

said Hester as she seated herself opposite Dr. Keen. "It is that he feels the only philosophy which can better the world is the philosophy of the spirit and Christ; and that it must germinate in our hearts before we can attain to any clear mental perception of it. Am I right?" And she glanced lovingly up at the man whose heart she felt she knew.

"Yes, you understand," he said, and rising put an end to the discussion.

As they moved away the poet appeared in the doorway.

"My greeting to you, sir," laughed a friend of Marcia's, Jeanie Carleton, a bright-faced girl of twenty-two. "Have the Muses given you a recess? Are you at liberty to remain away from them and among us mortals long enough to accept of a little earthly cheer?"

Very deliberately the poet took his seat by the side of Mrs. Duncan, who had returned to the coffee urn as she saw him approach. Then he slowly turned an expressive counte-

nance full of mock reproach upon the aggressive maiden.

"Miss Jeanie, I do not deserve this outburst of jealousy, I am hardly on speaking terms with the Muses, owing to my fealty to you."

"Hear! Hear!" cried Edmund Oldstory.

"Peace, my children," commanded Hester; but Miss Jeanie would not lose the last word, and as she fled upstairs she retorted: "We often get more than we deserve, down here."

The preparations for the evening, the decoration of the house with flowers, enlisted the volunteer service of the guests, and with a general air of good humor pervading the household, all hands were busy.

"Miss Jeanie needs some help I fancy," said Hester to Paul; "she has gone to hang the portiers Edmund has painted for the South and West rooms."

Paul followed Miss Carleton, and Hester said to the "Beautiful Lady:" "Madeline, if

you and Dr. Erle will adjourn to the garden and gather some flowers, I will join you later."

Marcia drew a stand before Edmund Oldstory and put a vase upon it with an armful of flowers.

"Master of ceremonies, allow me to provide you with an occupation," she said laughingly and went to gather more blossoms.

Edmund, leaning back upon the sofa cushions smiled contentedly. His lameness often caused him great pain, and could never be ignored for more than a short time, yet it never seemed to affect his bright spirits.

"Ah! Here comes one of the terriers," he exclaimed, a moment later.

"A terrier?" said Hester. "Is it black?"

"No, white, madame."

And leaning forward he called: "Here, Ted, come in and tell your mother what cousin Paul called you children last night."

His little namesake, a boy of five, came in

with his hands full of daisies and put them down before Edmund.

"Marcia said you were to have them."

"Yes, but tell your mother what you and Gretchen are."

"Holy terriers, mamma; cousin Paul says so."

Hester broke into a peal of laughter and remarked to the poet, who was studying the child's face, an amused expression in his own:

"To think that my children should be called terrors."

She kissed the boy fondly and sent him to look for Gretchen.

"Edmund, you and Paul will spoil those children, if spoiled they can be," she said with a pretty reservation, "for you don't seem to care what you say to them."

"Gretchen assured me yesterday 'I'm Mr. Edmund's beautiful angel, with the heavenly eyes—he says so—' if you can reconcile

'heavenly angels' and 'terriers' it is more than my ideas of Paradise will allow."

Here Marcia returned with her hands full of flowers and the poet rose and joined in the work of arranging them. All aided in the decorations, and sometimes it would be Erle and Miss Jeanie, or Erle and the Beautiful Lady, who found themselves together in the garden or in some corner which was being transformed into a sylvan bower, but never by any chance was it Erle and Marcia.

The poet had been gracefully attentive to Marcia. Erle began to think his admiration was taking a serious aspect, for he detected an unusual desire on his part to make himself useful and an evident reluctance at being separated from Marcia, as she went to and fro between the garden and the house.

Erle had watched Marcia's manner jealously, but from a distance, and she had not noticed his surveillance, and as yet he had seen no sign, however trivial, to make him

think the poet held more than the place of a friend in Marcia's thoughts.

He was still confirmed in the mistaken idea that Mark was first in her heart. But at last he fancied he saw more than the usual ingenuous kindness in Marcia's tone and look.

Hodaviah Crandle and Mrs. Dean had declared that more moss was needed for the miniature bank of ferns upon which they were busy, and the poet had said "Oh, Miss Marcia and I know where to get it!" Then to Marcia he had said quietly: "You will come?"

She had nodded an assent and together they had gone away, laughing like two children, lightly swinging a basket between them. Erle heard Marcia say, as they went down the path:

"The preparations are as pleasant as the affair itself will be, are they not?"

"Oh, I hope not," the poet replied. "I

beg you will not forget that the first waltz is mine; you promised it, you know."

It was this suggestion of a previous undertaking which stung Erle. He had been content to serve out his penance silently and patiently while he thought that it was Mark who was between them.

But surely Marcia must begin to know why he was back there, and if Mark no longer held her love she might find some way to let him know; while Marcia began to think that if he still loved her he should be the first to take some decided way to tell her so.

As for the poet, he had an insight into the hearts of these two, and fancied a little action on his part might bring things to a crisis. He was attracted toward Marcia and took good care that she never felt he exceeded the bounds of mere good fellowship, while his manner was calculated to make a very different impression upon outsiders.

This little side scene embittered the day for Erle. He grew coldly cynical in manner and speech, and became useless in the little services demanded of him, because of his preoccupation of mind. In the early evening he drifted into the library, where the older men were discussing serious questions, but he could not forget this new pain, this new doubt in his heart, and talk as he would, he found himself listening for the one voice which was music to his ears.

Marcia stopped at the door as she was passing, just in time to hear his last remark to Dr. Dean. He would not have made it in that bitter tone if he had known she was there. He had said:

"Dr. Dean, you clergymen must learn to come closer to the every-day needs of the souls you would save before the kingdom of Heaven comes on the earth. You must comfort the hungry hearts oftener and let the minds alone. There must be some great

change in your methods of feeding the hungry before you get down to the level of the daily needs and temptations of the average man, and are able to show him how to meet, resist and overcome evil with good, and that is the method which will do the work of regenerating this world."

He had turned as he finished and saw her standing there. His eyes had met hers almost defiantly for a second. Then her lids dropped and she moved away. Her look had been a searching one and Erle felt overwhelmed with remorse that he should have allowed himself that bitter moment. Yet there was only plain truth in what he had said, though he had spoken it bitterly. If more men knew how to touch the "heart of man" as Mr. Perry had done in those never-to-be-forgotten words, on board the vessel, then many men who were indifferent would begin to see and understand.

Leaving the library, Erle went into the

room where they had been dancing and talking to one another, not remembering what he said a moment after it was spoken, and striving in vain to keep his eyes and thoughts from her whose manner so bewildered him. He had watched her dancing, rather too frequently, he thought, with the poet and he knew she was unusually beautiful.

Her dress was some soft gray fabric, with an effect of silver here and there, and her flushed cheeks seemed to have caught their color from the great cluster of nodding carnations at her waist. She did not seem happy, and he longed to feel the touch of her hand upon his arm.

She was coming down the broad stairs in her stately way and he hastened to meet her.

"Marcia, shall patience be rewarded? Will you dance with me this time?"

She smiled her consent, and for a few moments Erle gave himself up to the one thought that his arm was about her. He

tried to imagine that nothing had happened, that they were the same as of yore. Marcia, too, was thinking in very much the same vein, and before they realized it, the music ceased and not a word had been spoken. He led her to a seat, just as Paul claimed her for the next dance, and the evening held nothing more of pleasure for him after that. Unnoticed, he sauntered out into the garden and lit a cigar.

After the guests were gone, Paul and he stood for a moment in the deserted parlor.

"Erle," said Paul, rather abruptly, "what is the matter with Marcia? She is preoccupied and altogether unlike herself. What have you people been doing to her down here?"

Erle answered, "I am hardly the one to ask. I had fancied her perfectly happy since Mr. Barrow's recovery."

"Why, what has that to do with her?" said Paul in astonishment.

"You should know better than I," replied Erle.

"Well, I don't; but I know some one else who is changed, quite as much as Marcia; and I tell you, old boy, I don't like it."

"Happiness usually proves a good tonic," said Erle, without attempting to hide the bitterness of his feeling.

"The supply of tonic is sadly lacking, then, I should judge," said Paul, looking up frankly at Erle.

"If I could only believe that were true!" said Erle, starting to leave the room.

"I tell you that it is," said Paul, detaining him; "and now I think you had better take steps toward securing a comfortable night's rest. Marcia is waiting to see me in the other room, but she will forgive me if I say good night through you."

Erle understood him. He looked in his eyes for a moment, then took his hand and pressed it earnestly.

Paul left the room, and for an instant Erle stood irresolute. He could not bring himself to humble his pride with no encouragement at all from Marcia. He had hoped to win her back to an understanding without putting his repentance into words. But this crucial test of his love was not to be spared him.

He passed slowly through the rooms until he reached the one in which he had taken Marcia in his arms for that brief moment at their first arrival.

Marcia, expecting Paul, did not turn her head. Her feet, in their dainty slippers, were stretched toward the fire of logs, for the evening was chilly, and she half reclined in the corner of the old-fashioned lounge which had been drawn up before the fireplace.

"Paul," she said, and she reached ner hands back over her head, "stand there while I tell you something."

Erle felt his heart beating wildly. He took her hands saying:

"It is I, Marcia, not Paul; will you listen while I tell you something?"

She did not withdraw her hands, and Erle bent over her saying:

"Marcia, is your heart closed to me forever? Has a single error closed against me the gates of happiness which once seemed opening for me? Marcia, tell me, have I returned in vain? Has my penitence come too late?"

The flames blazed up suddenly from the logs on the hearth, and lit up her face showing the tears which had gathered in her eyes while he was speaking.

Erle misconstrued the tears and prepared himself to consummate the sacrifice of his own hopes.

"Your life, Marcia," he continued, his face pale with suppressed emotion, "is bringing the fulfilment you foretold; you are making people better and happier, are you happy yourself?"

"Happy?" she repeated with a sigh.

"Yes, happy as you were when I first came to know you and—love you," said Erle.

Marcia's eyes sought his inquiringly, almost searchingly.

"Did you love me, Erle?"

"Marcia, I loved you then, I love you now, shall always love you, whatever may be its return."

"O Erle! If you would but understand me," said Marcia, rising and impetuously placing both her hands in his. Her action rather than her words flooded Erle's soul with a radiant hope and joy.

"I understand you better now," he said, tenderly leaning over to look into her eyes.

She met his look saying: "You think you understand me, yet you do not trust me?"

The yearning cry of her soul seemed speaking through her eyes to the heart of the man before her.

"I trust you, my darling, now and forever, wholly, completely, utterly."

His strong arms drew her, trembling, close to his breast. Her head nestled against him like that of a weary child. Their lips met, and all the pain, the doubt and misery of those weeks and months took flight like clouds before the morning sun.

Gently leading her to the lounge, Erle seated himself beside her, and there, in that dimly lighted room, told her the story of his love and the new life which had dawned for him, while Marcia listened, filled with the delight which only they that are pure in heart can know. The last few embers were smouldering on the hearth when Erle arose and taking her once more close to his breast said:

"You have taught me my lesson, my darling, I am ready to work for the divine."

He kissed her eyelids, almost reverently, then holding her face between his hands looked steadily into her eyes as he asked:

Marcia, what words will you give me, to fill my dreams to-night?"

"These, Erle," she said: "that I love you, have loved you through all, shall always love you."

The last word was lost in their good-night. The last spark was dead upon the hearth, but a new life would dawn upon the morrow.

Light had come from the darkness and out of the trial had come that peace which passeth all understanding.

* * * * *

As time goes by, he who runs may read the story of these two.

It is written in the hearts of those by whom they are surrounded. To the sick and sorry come help and cheer. To the unseeing comes a new light. Love grows in the stead of hate, and peace in the place of dissension. The dreams of the morning have become the reality of the day.

THE END.

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